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THOMPSON, COLIN. A Production of The School for Wives by Moliere, Adapted by Miles Malleson. (1976) Directed by: Dr. David R. Batcheller. Pp. 205.

It is the purpose of this study to direct a production of Moliere's School for Wives. The first part of the study consists of researching the historical background of the play and presenting a detailed analysis of the script, together with an outline of the director's stylistic approach.

The second part of the study is the rehearsal, production, and performance of School for Wives. The adaptation of School for Wives, by Miles Malleson, is presented, with the director's blocking, and lighting cues in the second chapter of this thesis.

The third part of the study is the director's analysis of his production, along with his critical evaluation of his work and his personal observations.

A PRODUCTION OF THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES

BY MOLIERE, ADAPTED BY

MILES MALLESON

by

Colin Thompson

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
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APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I
ANALYSIS FOR THE PREPARATION
OF SCHOOL FOR WIVES

Jean Baptiste Poquelin, or Moliere as he is usually remembered, emerges from the seventeenth century as perhaps the greatest writer of French classical comedy that has ever lived. His comedies are not the hollow frameworks of many of his contemporaries, nor are they the improvisations of stock characters from the tradition of *commedia dell'arte*. Rather, Moliere's plays are a successful attempt to deal with real problems in a situation that renders them amusing. This is not to say, however, that the characters are dealt with in a frivolous manner. On the contrary, Moliere treats his comic figures with great care, endowing each with a genuine human spirit.

In a time when affectation was the normal mode of life for the largely self-created intelligentsia, Moliere's writing was refreshingly unaffected. He was a pioneer in the writing of comedy, surpassing all who came before and creating an example that was to be copied by many. Although concerned primarily with the French society he knew, his plays have a universal quality in that, much like Shakespeare, he deals with subjects that are as vital today as they were then and are still worthy of our interest and attention.

His bourgeois birth and background gave little indications of his latent talents. He was born in Paris in 1622. The Paris of this period was, more or less, still a medieval city. The old city walls enclosed a labyrinthine network of filthy streets. The streets were crowded with decrepit houses. The appalling housing conditions of the poor were sharply contrasted by the elaborate housing of the aristocracy, tangible proof of the periods social structure.

When Moliere was two years old, Cardinal Richelieu became monarch in everything but name, and was to continue to lead France for over twenty years. Being poor and hungry was still the chief occupation of many. Heretics were still burned at the stake, and the Inquisition was a not too distant memory.

In the center of this confusion, however, literature survived, and indeed, flourished. Literature rose above the urban, rural, and political struggles of the century, and became the focal point for an intellectual and relatively wealthy minority. The French language was being refined and polished; Corneille was gradually perfecting the classic form of French tragedy and the French Academy, originally a private meeting ground for the diverse areas of French culture, was receiving royal recognition.

Moliere was born in an age of polemic ideals. Shakespeare, who had been dead for over six years, had written some of the most beautiful verse ever amid blood

sports and press gangs. Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Milton, and Boileau were working in an era when kings spent fortunes on palaces while the majority of their subjects went hungry. It was against this background of massive contrasts that Moliere wrote and produced some of the finest comedies in theatre history.

At a time when wealth was often the measure of the man, Moliere was at least born with a reasonable chance of success. His father, Jean Poquelin, was a prosperous, middle-class tradesman. He was an upholsterer who was fortunate enough to have been granted royal privilege. He was one of eight attendants of the King who attended to the royal furnishings. This conferred on M. Poquelin a certain solid eminence, thus at the birth of his first son word spread rapidly among Poquelin's fellow servants that here was an heir to continue his father's noble position in life.

His mother was, if reports are true, a quiet, rather fragile creature who read the Bible or the small volume of Plutarch she possessed. It would appear that Monsieur and Madame Poquelin had a quiet, affluent life, punctuated by the arrival of five children. Moliere's mother, after eleven years of this life died. Madame Poquelin's death had little lasting effect on the family. M. Poquelin married again just one year later and, while undoubtedly he was a good husband, he needed the "convenience" of a wife. There is no evidence that the family was a close one or that Jean

Baptiste enjoyed family life. This is perhaps unimportant except for two points: one, Moliere completely deserted his family for the life of an actor; and two, his writings contain no direct reference to close family life.

Much of his subject matter came from his experiences in his father's shop. His father having royal patronage ensured that the upholstery shop had a steady flow of the French elite. From early in his life, Jean-Baptiste worked in his father's shop. H. C. Taylor-Chatfield described the perfect opportunity Moliere had to view the titled, wealthy people who came in search of fabrics and furniture repairs.

Had Jean Baptiste been content to accept the lot of a successful shopkeeper his only care need have been to learn his father's trade. But he was born with a turbulent heart, and that atmosphere of middle class respectability, with its smell of upholstery and glue, must have stifled him even in childhood. One day was like another. The shop must be opened and swept, the goods arranged to attract purchasers, orders filled and bills collected, and regular meals eaten in the kitchen. Yet even the narrowness of such life was not unblessed. While watching his father's customers, young Poquelin learned to know the capricious ladies of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie who aped court manners, the fops, the uncouth burghers and the rascally seryants--in a word, the characters he drew so inimitably.¹

It is impossible to determine where his interests in theatre came from and what initial spark first fired his enthusiasm for the theatre. There are many half-facts, half-legends, concerning his Grandfather who, having a passion for the theatre, was only too delighted to include

¹H. C. Taylor-Chatfield, Moliere, A Biography (New York: Duffield and Company, 1906), p. 6.

his grandson in his not infrequent trips to the theatres of Paris. His maternal Grandfather, Louis Cresse, should also be given credit for furthering the boy's interest in theatre. Responsibility for these trips is unimportant, the fact is that, at an impressionable age, Jean-Baptiste was able to see some of the finest Farceurs of Italian comedy at work. This must have counted quite strongly when in later years he stood, undecided as to a career.

There was little formal schooling in young Poquelin's life until the age of fifteen. It is probable that his early adolescence was concerned primarily with the trade of apprentice upholsterer. When the time came for him to be educated he was in a fortunate position. His father wished to give him the finest education possible and was able to pay for it. At the time, the most prestigious college was the College de Clermont. Founded and run by Jesuits, the college easily surpassed, in quality of teaching, the French University.

The instruction of Clermont was essentially classical, with two basic aims: solidity of knowledge and flexibility of style. All communication was in Latin and the principal subjects of study were grammar, rhetoric, humanities and philosophy. Works by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian formed the basis of much of the teaching. It was in this atmosphere that Jean-Baptiste became friends with the young intellectual elite of France. Many of these

friendships lasted throughout his life, and he was to be grateful for them more than once during his precarious career.

It would appear that at the time he finished at Clermont in 1639, he had little or no real idea of where his future lay; visions of the theatre, only based on memory, had evidently not crystallized by that time. It is known that he explored a few possibilities, albeit in very apathetic fashion. He studied theology for a season at the Sorbonne and also, at the prompting of his father, studied law. This was an attempt on the part of his father, to sever Jean-Baptiste's connections with a group of itinerant actors, the Bejarts. This maneuver was not only unsuccessful, it proved to be a turning point in the boy's life. For a year later, renouncing succession to his father's position at court, he joined with the Bejarts in his first venture into theatre.

The reason behind this move may not have been devotion to theatre. It is generally surmised that he was indeed the lover of Madeleine Bejart. Although relatively young, she was already an experienced actress and a worldly-wise woman. She was beautiful too, and this combination of attractions must have proved irresistible to the young Poquelin. It was at this point that he adopted the pseudonym of Moliere. The reason or reasons behind this are unknown. Scholastic theorizing tends toward two explanations:

one, that he did not want to endanger his family's respectable name; or two, a sudden theatrical fervour seized him and led him to attempt to sever all links with his middle-class background. This sudden excitement seems a little premature as it is obvious that Moliere joined the troupe as a rank beginner, untrained and untried. The lack of experience in no way deterred him. His initial desire was to play in tragic roles; an area he was unsuited for both physically and temperamentally. The final realization of his inability to be an effective tragedian was slow in coming and despite his many failures in writing and performing tragedy, he carried his love of "serious drama" with him until he died.

The little group of aspiring thespians which he joined appears to have been, initially at least, predominantly an amateur group. With the exception of the Bejarts, its members seem to have been drawn from various walks of life who, desiring the free life of the theatre, had all quit their previous occupations. Many such groups appeared in Paris at this time, formed, more or less, upon the same lines. Some of the groups grew around would-be playwrights who, for the privilege of having their plays performed, financed the groups' theatrical attempts. A common practice of these struggling theatres was to adorn themselves with an imposing title. Moliere and his friends were no exception, choosing the presumptuous title of Illustre Theatre,

the Illustrious Theatre. Then, in a move which seems the direct antithesis of their title, promptly moved into an old tennis court.

This action was almost certainly made for financial reasons. While not a perfect theatre, it was, with the addition of seats, boxes, a stage and some cavilles, a reasonable performance area. Old records show that this building was about one hundred feet long by some forty feet wide. This practice of using tennis courts was widespread and their use persisted well into the nineteenth century.² An interesting fact and one that no doubt led to Moliere getting some choice roles, was the policy of cost sharing. The financial burden of the theatre was shared by its more affluent members. Moliere, having some money left him in his mother's will and having borrowed from his father, was one of these. The major contributors, in recognition of their generosity, were allowed choice of characters in the plays performed. This certainly gave Moliere plenty of opportunity to follow his tragic bent.

The fortunes of the Illustrious Theatre are fortunately well documented, notably because they were in Paris and in view of critics and spectators alike. Despite its grandiose title and seemingly adequate funding, the little theatre was a complete failure. The plays they chose were

²Brander Matthews, Moliere, His Life and Work (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1910), p. 23.

poorly written, lugubrious pieces such as The Death of Seneca and The Death of Crispus. Audiences were few at the beginning and less towards the end. The expected carriages bringing the wealthy never came and the elaborate boxes remained empty. It seems they chose to blame their misfortunes on the location of the theatre, but even a move closer to the heart of Paris made no difference. In 1645 the theatre was closed. Moliere, deeply in debt, was tried and imprisoned. After several months of various troubles, he was saved by his father who agreed to underwrite the group's debts. So it was, penniless but still full of confidence, Moliere, in company with Madeleine Bejart and a few faithful members of the troupe, left Paris to seek his fortune in the Provinces.³

Provincial France was to remain the stamping ground of Moliere for the next thirteen years, between 1645 to 1658. Like many of the details of his life, little is known of this period beyond where he went. However, it is certain that in this period, among the small towns and multitude of theatres the groups played in, are the years that structured Moliere's genius. It was here that he grew in stature as an actor and laid the foundations of his future greatness as a playwright. Although his three rough years in Paris had served to help the transformation from amateur to professional, the thirteen years of provincial touring adequately prepared him for his return to Paris. But to begin with

³Taylor-Chatfield, p. 34.

there were few indications of his feeling for comedy; his interest still lay chiefly in the direction of tragedy.

His first attempts at acting in comedy are not known for sure, but there is some indication that he began to write comedies about 1652 while performing in Lyons. These initial steps were probably modeled upon the boisterous Italian farces of the period. Drawn to them because of their unfailing popularity, they taught him the basis of play construction and how to hold an audience's attention. Two of these, La Jalousie de Barbouille or The Jealousy of Smutty Face and Le Medecin Volant or The Flying Physician, have been preserved although their date is uncertain. Although unrepresentative of his later works, they both show a fundamental grasp of comic incongruity and display signs of ideas he was to explore in much greater detail later in life.⁴

His first major venture into playwriting was in 1653 when he wrote a five-act play, in verse, entitled, L'Etourdi. In style it still demonstrates much of the Italian influence; an influence that was to decrease but never completely disappear. By this time the fortunes of the company had greatly improved. At the mercy of the whims of local officials, as were all traveling actors, they appear to have acquired a reputation that helped them considerably in this area. An indication of their new found fame and fortune is the length

⁴Ibid., p. 53.

of time they stayed in one place. While Lyon remained their base from about 1652 onwards, extended stays of up to a year in other cities were not uncommon. In conjunction with this they are known to have given private performances in the homes of many wealthy and titled people.⁵

While at Bezier in 1656 Moliere wrote and presented his second full length play, Depit Amoureux. This too was a five act play, written in rhymed Alexandrines. Although not especially distinguished, it does represent another careful step forward in his writing of comedy, marking one of the first tentative steps away from commedia farces. It was about this time that a return to Paris began to seem a feasible proposition. Although intimidated by their previous failure in Paris, Moliere and Madeleine Bejart began to make tentative steps in the direction of the capital city.

Thirteen years had wrought many changes upon the company. Madeleine Bejart no longer reigned supreme, Moliere now having the responsibility for the group's fortunes. Having emerged as a fine comic actor and as a playwright of no mean ability, it was perhaps logical that this transition should take place. However, it left him with the unenviable task of establishing a theatre in Paris. In the light of their Parisian debut, it seems probable that he sought help from friends in high places. H. C. Taylor-Chatfield describes Moliere's reappearance in Paris.

⁵Matthews, p. 34.

October twenty-fourth, 1658, is a momentous day in the life of this strolling player. To give him audience, ladies with coifs and point lace collars, courtiers in perukes and silken doublets, gathered before a temporary stage in the Guard room of the old Louvre; King Louis, too, was there; Monsieur the profligate; portly Anne of Austria, and Mazarin, triumphant;--possibly brave D'Artagnan stood guard that night. Behind the royal family and the pleasure loving dames d'honneur were flippant gentlemen prepared to yawn; actors of the Hotel de Bourgogne, to scoff. Amid the glow of candles and the odour of fragrance, Moliere made his bow to Paris and the world.⁶

The company, or more probably Moliere, had chosen a tragedy by Corneille, Nicomedie, as their inaugural performance. Although a relatively new work, it is certain that nearly everybody in the audience had seen it, with Montfleury, "bombastic and ranting"⁷ in the leading role. Moliere's more naturalistic presentation did little to make an impression on them and the play received scant enthusiasm. For a while, as the group's fortune hung in the balance, it must have seemed that they were doomed to spend more time in the provinces.

At this point, Moliere, determined in the face of adversity, stepped forward with a modest speech and introduced one of his own short comedies, Le Docteur Amoureux. The response to this was as positive as the response to Nicomedie had been negative. The King was delighted and from that juncture on, success was assured.

⁶Taylor-Chatfield, p. 85.

⁷Phylis Hartnoll, ed., The Oxford Companion to the Theatre (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 648.

The security seemingly was not without its drawbacks, however. Moliere was granted use of the Petit-Bourbon theatre, in conjunction with the Italian group already established there. This troupe, under the famous Tiberio Fiorelli or Scaramouche, took precedence and allowed Moliere to play only on the less lucrative days. In addition, he had to work around the fixed scenery and pay the Italian company a considerable rent. The group suffered artistically too. Under Moliere's direction they continued to play Corneille's tragedies; this elicited little response from the public and even less money.

It appears that Moliere still had little desire to present comedy and a lack of confidence in his own abilities, because he waited for almost a year before putting on two of his own comedies, in an attempt to draw audiences. L'Etourdi and Le Depit Amoureux proved to be a great success, drawing the attention of Parisian theatregoers to the abilities of the struggling company. Shortly after this he presented Les Precieuses Ridicules, a biting one act satire on the affectations of society ladies. Production of this play had two effects, the company was established as a major force for good theatre and it gave Moliere a taste of the controversy his plays were to arouse.

Les Precieuses Ridicules brought about a storm of protest and criticism and initiated a familiar pattern to Moliere in later years, honored by some and hated and abused

by others. None of these controversies, however, kept him from expressing his feelings and ideals in his plays, all treated with the same levity that overlayed a serious concern for hypocrisy, bigotry, pretension, and "a struggle to attack social iniquities."⁸

The patronage of the King was a somewhat ambiguous affair. While it brought with it a security unknown in former days and without which Moliere and his troupe would have disappeared amid a welter of protest, it lay upon them certain obligations. These obligations took the form of ballets and plays performed at royal festive occasions. These affairs were often summoned at short notice and led to a frenzy of activity. One of the best remembered of these court plays is L'Impromptu de Versailles or the Versailles Impromptu, written and performed in 1663.

Written at the command of the King, this was a satirical attack on the actors of the Hotel de Bourgogne and coincided with the point in his life when Moliere was plagued with rumors about his private life, notably his marriage to Armande Bejart. It is believed that the actors of the Hotel de Bourgogne, out of jealousy of Moliere's royal preferment were largely responsible for these attacks and also, attacks on his writing and acting. Supposedly out

⁸Ibid., p. 648.

of curiosity at how he would respond, the King invited Moliere to write his reply under royal protection.

Although written and rehearsed in the space of a week, the piece shows an ingenuity and an adroitness found in other great writers of calibre like Aristophanes and Sheridan. (Many critics have condemned Moliere for stooping so low in replying to the insults.) By remaining silent he may have emerged as a stronger figure. Certainly he was never to indulge in this form of literary revenge again. In the future he preferred to let his plays stand on their own merits, and was content to let his audiences decide the quality of his work.

In 1660 the Petit Bourbon was demolished and Moliere and company moved to the grander and more spacious quarters of Richilieu's theatre in the Palais Royal. Here, in what was to be his final attempt at tragedy, he presented his only failure. It was a drama of heroism, Don Garcie de Navarre, ou le Prince Jaloux. Predictably, this followed the path of his previous attempts at tragedy; it was a complete failure. Redemption followed, however, when, in 1661, he wrote and presented L'Ecole des Maris or The School for Husbands. Relatively inconspicuous in itself, it marks the beginning of his greatest period.

The first of what are generally considered as his finest plays is L'Ecole des Femmes or The School for Wives, written and performed in 1662. Some fifteen months had

elapsed since The School for Husbands had been performed, and was a period of varied emotions in Moliere's life. Early in 1662 he had married his ward, Armande Bejart, daughter of Madeleine, a girl some twenty years his junior. While being deeply in love with her, he was also beset by doubts; doubts as to her fidelity and doubts about his own ability to maintain the relationship. In addition to this, he was assailed by insults and accusations from his enemies, conspicuously, the actors from the Hotel de Bourgogne.

These centered around the rumor, unfounded but seemingly possible, that Armande was in fact Moliere's daughter by Madeleine Bejart. This controversy has persisted even to this day. It has never been conclusively resolved, but intensive examination over the years of what little evidence there is, has led to the belief that she was not his daughter. At the time, however, these rumors did little to help the unstable relationship. Armande, although she was an excellent actress, was fickle and flirtatious. She was to prove something of a trial to Moliere for the rest of his life, and she seems to appear in various plays as both a heroic figure and a worthless one.

Following The School for Wives was a period of intense activity at Court. Apart from L'Critique de l' Ecole des Femmes, written as a defense of his comedy, nothing was written of importance. This interlude was broken in 1664 with a play he had been concerned with for some time, but

had never performed publicly. The play was Tartuffe. This play ranks as perhaps the most controversial of all his plays. After its first performance before a public audience, pressure from religious factions in Paris forced him to stop further performances. The same religious elements also succeeded in suppressing the play for five years, although it appeared during that time in a much altered version, L'Imposteur. Not until 1669, when the King granted Moliere permission to produce the play again, did it appear in its true form.

If the controversy that surrounded the play is ignored, Tartuffe emerges as a true masterpiece and shows a great progression in Moliere's writing. In School for Wives he attempted to portray life as he saw it, but the situation is not as credible as Tartuffe. In this play he demonstrates the follies of men in a very real manner, showing the blindness of a man trapped by an ideal. In Tartuffe the characters exist for what they are, rather than what they do, and the plot exists because of the characters. Only once, in the ending, does Moliere stoop to artifice. With Tartuffe he demonstrated the level of excellence to which comedy could be raised, the kind of exultation that had not existed previously.

From this date this quality is evident in all his work. Some plays are considered greater because they deal

with prominent social issues, as seen that is, by Moliere. Because of his intense concern with social issues, however, it is important not to discount his other writing. He was, above all else, a working playwright and actor, dependent on his craft to earn his living. Thus while still as well written, many of the other plays were produced on private request or royal commission. The work Moliere did for the King demonstrates entertainment value, with few controversial issues to intrude. We are fortunate that Moliere was able to write plays on issues that concerned him as well as work that brought him money and allowed him to exercise his incisive humor in the form of brilliant satirical comedy.

During his period of dominance of the French theatre he was respected primarily as an actor and producer of comedy. It is only long after his death that his greatest achievement has been recognized. He took comedy, then valued solely as light entertainment, left to the crude machinations of clownish strolling players, and gave it a status, previously reserved for the classic tragedy.

He raised it from the domain of farce and made it a vehicle of social satire, a supple, living organism capable of the nicest gradations of light and shade, able at once to divert and admonish.⁹

⁹Ibid., p. 649.

The Historical Background
of School for Wives

If a playwright writes about the experiences of his own life then it follows that his work demonstrates, with reasonable accuracy, his environment. If he also allows the dictates of his conscience a degree of freedom then he leaves the imprint of his emotions on his writing. An examination of Moliere's life, combined with a study of his play, reveals he was no exception. His environment and society are shown clearly in all his plays. The question of his personal life is much more indistinct. An academic argument has arisen over School for Wives and Moliere's emotional involvement in it. One faction views it as supportive of young love overcoming all obstacles:

And when the new play did come into being at last, it brought with it something of the spring time aroma of that happy season [i.e., Moliere's marriage and honeymoon]. It is full of zest and verve, full of sympathy for young love, and full of gaiety--a contagious gaiety which won for it at once a popularity unequalled by any of the earlier pieces. . . .¹⁰

The contrasting viewpoint is based solely on evidence of Moliere's wife's personality. Much of this evidence is possibly conjecture on the part of early scholars; there is no definite record of Armande's character. However, the opposition maintains that the play is something of a personal revelation on the part of Moliere.

¹⁰Matthews, p. 113.

. . . still, so vain a bride as Armande Bejart could not long restrain her coquetry in the atmosphere in which her honeymoon was passed, nor could her doting husband long remain blind to the ways of libertine admirers; so the conclusion that the many touching strophes of this comedy set forth the trials and sorrows of the poet's heart seem amply justified. Indeed, nowhere, save in The Misanthrope did he so clearly sing the misery of his soul, . . .¹¹

It is possible that an author, determined to prove his hypothesis, could find threads of evidence anywhere; "There is a danger, of course, that, in this quest for introspective passages, caution may be outweighed by zeal."¹²

However, if a comparison of School for Husbands (1661), the preceding and companion piece to School for Wives, is undertaken there are some distinct changes in mood and feeling. The role of optimism concerning marriage, expressed by the bridegroom in School for Husbands, becomes a note of cynicism in the hands of Chrysalde in School for Wives. Here is a married man of some experience, resigned to the affairs of a capricious wife. The argument remains an open one, but it is clear that Moliere's marriage, which preceded the writing of School for Wives by almost a year, affected this play in some way.

In the light of modern views on marriage and sexuality, somewhat varied and indistinct though they may be, it is difficult of believe the storm of protest that the presentation of School for Wives aroused. Contemporary

¹¹Taylor-Chatfield, p. 166.

¹²Ibid., p. 166.

moralists found "sufficient heresy to declare him the enemy of both common decency and the Holy Church."¹³

These charges, made by influential people, were directed at two parts of the play: Chrysaldes' open defense of wifely infidelity, which was taken as an attack on marital ethics and as giving support to adulterous behavior and the scene where Arnolphe instructs his young ward in the duties of a faithful wife, including the reading aloud of the Maxims of Marriage. This was taken as a crude paraody on pulpit homilies and the catechism.

While obviously suggesting a strongly militant idea, aimed principally at the French bourgeois, it still would appear that such severe condemnation was unwarranted, even in the light of seventeenth century religious beliefs and moral conduct. Research by scholars of French literature has shown that, while some of the criticism was genuine, much has its roots in the Hotel de Bourgogne. The actors there, who had suffered greatly because of Moliere's popularity, especially at court, sought every opportunity to discredit him publicly.

If a protracted examination of Moliere's plays is taken, in chronological order, it becomes apparent that School for Wives is an important progression in his writing. His long apprenticeship in the provinces had taught him

¹³Ibid., p. 167.

much about appealing to his audiences. This shows itself in several subtle aspects of School for Wives. To a contemporary, lacking the opportunity to take a long overview, this play must have appeared as just another clever comedy by Moliere; had Shakespeare died prior to Romeo and Juliet, his first tragedy, there would have been little insight into the depth of his dramatic perception.¹⁴

There was in School for Wives, little to distinguish it from previous works. Indeed some critics found it to be inferior to School for Husbands. Writing after Moliere's death, Voltaire found it to be of less merit, having a greater artificiality of plot. This has been commented on by modern critics too ". . . , School for Wives clumsily built on an overlong quidproquo and disentangled by a badly prepared recognition."¹⁵ In addition to this, the lack of originality of the theme has been adversely commented on; its source being identifiable, through Italian and Spanish authors as far back as Herodotus.

However, despite the lack of original material and its technical imperfections, the play was successful. "Connoisseurs admired the dexterity with which Moliere was able to interest and please through five acts. . . ."¹⁶

¹⁴Matthews, p. 114.

¹⁵Jacques Guicharnaud, ed., Moliere: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1964) p. 20.

¹⁶Taylor-Chatfield, p. 163.

Perhaps the greatest emendation lay in the development of Moliere's characters. Albeit, Horace and the servants are still recognizable as the stock lover and stock menials, they do possess a life rarely, if ever, seen before. The greatest single achievement in depth of characterization lies in Arnolphe. Arnolphe dominates the play; here is a man, portrayed with great subtlety, caught in the conflict of his own emotions. There is no reliance on the buffoonery of commedia, the humor being drawn from the stubbornness of a man who refuses to see life as it is. The scenes between Arnolphe and Agnes are tinged with pathos, which allows us to laugh at the absurd Arnolphe while also identifying with his motivations. His idealistic view of innocence is a far cry from Sganarelle's despotic tenet of locks and keys, as shown in School for Husbands. Both plays provoke laughter, only School for Wives provokes reflection too.

The original production brought two reactions: the indignant condemnation that has already been discussed, and the support of everybody else who saw it. The play was among the earliest of Moliere's great successes, the adverse comments no doubt giving him excellent publicity. A critic who saw the original stated, ". . . all the world found School for Wives wicked, and all the world went to see it. . . ." ¹⁷ On January 6, 1663 the play was performed

¹⁷Ibid., p. 136.

before the King. So great was his enjoyment of the performance, he commanded a repeat rendition just two weeks later.

In June of 1663, an interesting sequel to School for Wives appeared. Inspired partly by the King's approval and partly by public approval of his play, Moliere wrote a reply to his critics, La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes or The Criticism of the School for Wives. Lacking the satirical bite of Impromptu at Versailles, it was a subtle piece, aimed at the pomposity of the critics he considered had dealt unfairly with School for Wives. A detailed examination of it here is not particularly relevant; suffice it to say that it in its turn unleashed a further wave of vengeful criticism.

In terms of his playwriting, School for Wives is a milestone in Moliere's theatrical career. It demonstrates the inception of his exploration of the comic depths of mankind. Although not the first to display the bourgeoisie as amusingly irrational, it is fundamental in its demonstration of fine comic perspective. Moliere was fully cognizant of his own time and its inherent social flaws. He drew heavily on this knowledge but succeeded in showing that, despite their foibles, his characters are human, and we should sympathize and hope for them.

Justification for the Choice of Script

The tradition of translating Moliere into the English language is an old one. The first recorded production of an English translation took place in England in 1718. Since that time this process has been a fairly constant one, successive generations of scholars producing their own offerings. The fact that most of these translations have an academic background is an important one. Here the prime concern is academic accuracy; little consideration is given all too often to the fact that these works are intended for performance.

This leads to certain difficulties. There is a universal quality in Moliere's writing which is nevertheless couched in a strong impression of the period. This impression is not only some three hundred years old but also in French. This immediately poses many problems of translation. Mrs. Phyllis Hartnoll states that "In transit, the wit evaporates and only a skeleton plot is left. This, however, will not deter people from trying to translate them [the plays]."18

There is much inherent in the French language that is impossible to render into English. The intonation and stress patterns of French are very different. Generally speaking, the elongation of the vowels and differing

18Hartnoll, p. 614.

expression of the consonants ensures a melodic flow that cannot be captured by the relatively staccatto English pronunciation. In addition to this there is a quality of verbal dexterity and pun-making which is impossible to interpret. This phenomenon is not peculiar to French; all languages have expressions concerning an infinite variety of topics which cannot be adequately expressed in other languages.

Another aspect of translating is the problem of rhyming. Moliere was essentially a poet and his characters speak his poetry with a delicate flow, only possible in French. The audience member, while aware of rhymed verses, is never offended by contrived patterns, unless of course this is used to create a deliberate effect. In their desire to present a faithful translation, many scholars do contrive rhymes, making it difficult for the actor to achieve a flexibility in his speaking of the verses. In English, the lines demonstrate a strongly rhythmic beat, a regular stress that falls on the rhyming word of each line. In a couplet form this induces a repetitive pattern, difficult for even highly skilled and experienced actors, that easily becomes monotonous. Thus, while maintaining integrity to the author, the life and humor of the play is sacrificed.

In looking for a translation of School for Wives three criteria were established: one, it had to retain the

qualities of Moliere's original text; two, that it be in a form an actor, inexperienced in speaking verse, could use with confidence; and three, the form be acceptable to a modern audience. With these in mind this director turned to the adaptations of Moliere by Miles Malleeson. These adaptations are a blend of the original comedy and modern language, written in a manner that enables the actor to explore the comedy of his character without being bound by contrived language.

Mr. Malleeson (1888-1969), was primarily an actor, but he studied Moliere's plays extensively. Realizing the actors' problems in coping with translated scripts, he adapted many of the plays into freer form, with great success. He appeared in many of his own adaptations while working with major British theatre companies. Over the years he achieved fame as a character actor playing such parts as Arnolphe in School for Wives and the title role in Tartuffe.

Some of his best work was done in his own adaptations of Moliere, which though not always sufficiently close to the original to satisfy the purists, nevertheless had the merit of bringing Moliere to the English stage in actable modern versions which appealed to the average playgoer, and have proved invaluable to repertory and provincial theatres.¹⁹

All of the basic elements of Moliere's original comic structure are retained, including direct translations

¹⁹Ibid., p. 649.

of lines and situation which are readily translatable. All of the original scenes are retained, but there are only three acts as opposed to five. The character of the Notary has been eliminated, a practical move as his role is small and of no real significance. Thus, one less expensive period costume is needed.

In respect of the plot, action and pacing, the adaptation maintains an accuracy that is perfectly justifiable. This director feels that Mr. Malleson's background, that of combined actor and academician, enabled him to write a script that retains all the qualities of the original and captures a form more readily acceptable to the modern audience and actor.

The Play, The Characters and

The Style of Production

The theme of School for Wives is a simple one, the love of an older man for a younger woman. However, the complexity of the plot and the action belies this simplicity. The characters follow a predictably complicated route to the eventual happy ending. Most of the convolutions of the plot are believable, or at least conceivable, only the final scene stretches one's credibility somewhat. A method employed by Moliere to add interest is the way in which he lets Arnolphe win every round of his struggle with Horace and then loses the fight. This technique is certainly not unique to Moliere but School for Wives is his first attempt to use it

throughout a play. It was a successful experiment he was to repeat several times.

The plot revolves around the love of Arnolphe, a wealthy middle-class man, for his young and attractive ward. In an effort to insure her innocence of worldly matters he has had her raised and educated in a convent, successfully shielding her from virtually every facet of social life. He considers that his future wife should have no knowledge of such matters. His reasons are that he is aware of the immorality of his society and has no desire to be cuckolded as many of his friends have been. He is about to marry her when she falls in love with a young man, despite Arnolphe's elaborate precautions to protect her. Henceforth a desperate struggle ensues, both men attempting to claim her affections. The young man, Horace, unaware that Arnolphe is his adversary (Arnolphe having assumed the name La Souche) and believing him to be a friend, glibly confides all his plans to him. Thus warned, Arnolphe is able to stay one step ahead of his "enemy". Several sharp clashes ensue and Arnolphe appears to have won when Agnes' long lost father providentially appears, insisting that she marry the son of his old friend. Naturally this is Horace and so the situation is saved. Balance is restored and Arnolphe, who by this time genuinely loves the girl, is cheated of his idyllic marriage.

The action is virtually continuous. The few short jumps in time that are present are to allow unseen actions to be performed. These are adequately covered by short expository speeches. The result is a unity of action that insures all details are understood; an important factor when dealing with fast comedy. The setting provides a further unity of action. Originally located in a city square, this location was altered by Miles Malleon to the inside and outside of Arnolphe's house. The change is intended to be fast and simple so not to slow the flow of action.

The plot follows the classic lines of play construction, rising in a series of minor climaxes, each heightened a little more than its predecessor by deeper involvement of Arnolphe and Horace in their conflict, to the play's final denouement. Each peak is prepared in advance and is succeeded by a slight lull. By these variations the action is captivating but allows sufficient time for an audience member to consolidate his knowledge of the play and thus heighten his appreciation of the comedy.

While never departing from a development of the theme, the play includes occasional interludes of comedy which contribute little to the continuation but enrich the performance with a variance of style. With close inspection traces of *commedia lazzi* can be discovered, a reminder of Moliere's early efforts. These scenes are provided

principally by the two servants and center around their relationship and interplay with Arnolphe. Although they never descend to the bawdy humor of commedia, they do contribute a broader viewpoint. Their analysis of a situation is inevitably simple; sophisticated motives are stripped away and the basic core is revealed.

ALAIN

Put it like this:
If you was hungry, with a plate o' soup,
and someone comes along, as hungry as you,
and puts his spoon in--
wouldn't you be cross?

GEORGETTE

Of course I should.

ALAIN

Well there you are.
A wife's a plate of soup.
And who wants another feller dippin' 'is fingers in?²⁰

Still another viewpoint is provided by Chrysalde. His opinion contrasts Arnolphe's, opposing his proposed marriage and acting as a form of conscience. Chrysalde's view represents a reason, countering Arnolphe's irrationality. In the first scene, an exposition between the two, his words are a portent of doom. He attempts, in a gently refined fashion, to warn Arnolphe of his inevitable disaster.

²⁰Moliere, The School for Wives, adpt. Miles Malleson (London, Samuel French, 1954), p. 22.

But I fear for you
 I give you solemn warning.
 Marriage, for you, is a far greater menace,
 than for any other man, throughout the whole of Paris.²¹

Of all the facets of this play, the most interesting is the element of human feeling that Moliere introduced. This is contained in the change of attitude Arnolphe has towards Agnes. Initially his motivation is one of self-interest, his temporary dominance of her life excludes any genuine emotion. Only when his control of her has evaporated and Agnes begins to assert her personality, does he look inward and perceive his true emotions. In one way this moment of perception is the crux of the play. Moliere leads Arnolphe to this point and then confronts him with a choice. He can face his arrogant stupidity and the futility of his actions, withdrawing with pride only slightly damaged, or he can pursue his course and suffer the consequences.

Of course there is never any question of which direction he will take. Moliere knew that most people face similar problems during their life and often, through their own stubbornness, make the wrong decision. His inclusion of this observation in School for Wives greatly expands the scope of the play.

Arnolphe must endure the outcome, it is his responsibility and largely the result of his own folly. His losing is a doubly bitter blow now that he is actually in

²¹Ibid., p. 2.

love with Agnes. His discovery of this emotion prompts the only action which can be counted in his favor. He openly declares his love, offering Agnes an unconditional marriage, but to no avail:

ARNOLPHE

See! I'm on my knees.
Just say the word.
I'll beat my brains out,
or I'll kill myself.

AGNES

Oh please do stop.
Why should you kill yourself.
Its all so silly.
If you're my slave . . .

ARNOLPHE

I am. I am. I am.

AGNES

Then take me back to Horace
and let me marry him.²²

This is the breaking point. Arnolphe remains resolute and becomes violently angry. He flatly refuses to see reason and promptly determines that, if she cannot give her love to him, she shall not give it to anyone else.

Handled by a playwright less skillful than Moliere the situation would probably become very clumsy. However, the situation is handled in a way that combines humor and pathos. We laugh at Arnolphe's stupidity but secretly sympathize with him; after all, is there anyone who has not

²²Ibid., p. 90.

let a situation like this expand to overwhelming proportions? Despite this sympathy, however, there is great relief when Arnolphe is prevented from completing his schemes.

Since the contrived ending has been discussed previously, it only remains to say that it is unchanged in Mr. Malleson's adaptation. Its contrast to the rest of the play is obvious, but does not in fact ruin the play's overall effect, because it serves as a unifying effect to insure a pleasing conclusion. The conclusion leaves the audience with a moral, one of Moliere's main desires. He demonstrates that a man, blinded by fervent belief in an ideal, can easily ignore the fact that that ideal itself may be suspect and the means of achieving it immoral. Moliere advocates that there be a degree of circumspection in "affairs of the heart" and that a balance between fantasy and reality be maintained.

The Characters

From the actor's viewpoint, the play belongs to Arnolphe. It is staged around his emotions, words and deeds. In depth of characterization Arnolphe stands in relief, leaving the other characters in the shade. All then, except Arnolphe, are still reminiscent of the stock characters Moliere was so used to dealing with. They demonstrate qualities not found in commedia but remain unexplored in detail.

In the creation of Arnolphe, Moliere drew from his own experience of people. He is shaped with techniques rarely used in comedy prior to that period. Notable among these is the use of soliloquy. In the original these are numerous; when translated they assume a somewhat labored and monotonous air. In an effort to revive the English versions, Miles Malleson has condensed and trimmed the soliloquies. He has reduced the number to four, placed strategically in the script, to illuminate differing elements of Arnolphe's psychological state. In these soliloquies Arnolphe is endowed with really believable, realistic qualities. As Hamlet reveals his torment in moments of solitude, so Arnolphe betrays the changes and conflicts of his emotions.

Many of Arnolphe's qualities are obviously taken from life. When an introspective glance is given to Moliere's life at the time of writing School for Wives, the argument that the source was his life seems feasible. If Arnolphe and Moliere are linked then the playwright underwent a period of severe frustration; the result being a philosophical and moral treatise in a theatrical form. Unlike Moliere, however, who it appears remained objective enough to make a comment afterwards, Arnolphe is controlled by his passions.

In this respect he becomes the victim of fate, in that he creates his own destiny. He actively pursues an

ideal and is rewarded with defeat and condemnation. Within the precincts of his society this is natural because he engages in the dangerous act of breaking social conventions. Any attempt in this direction, regardless of whether the conventions are ancient or modern, immediately instigates persecution by the majority who find security in the social order. One part of Arnolphe's action, that of marrying a beautiful young wife, is allowable, resulting only in the sneers of the envious. The second part is far more serious. Arnolphe openly commits an immoral act when he inflicts his will upon Agnes who is, ostensibly, unable to defend herself. It is this act, symbolized in the play, that Moliere is protesting against.

In portraying Arnolphe, Moliere endows him with great material security, a possible contrast to his emotional insecurity. Obviously wealthy, he owns several houses and freely gives Horace a large sum of money. He is educated and superficially enjoys a full social life. It is his involvement in society that prompts him to evolve his plan for a perfect marriage. Acutely aware of the embarrassment some men suffer because of their wives' behavior, he is determined to escape unscathed. He selects a foundling child, structures her upbringing and dominates her life in order to create, in his eyes, the perfect wife. This is a melodramatic situation; the worldly villain pursuing the innocent maid. As in all good melodrama though, innocence triumphs

and evil is cursed. Moliere neatly turns the tables on Arnolphe, allowing him to be ridiculed by the society that had so long been the butt of his ridicule.

While not having the dramatic power of Arnolphe, the other characters do possess individuality. This distinction, while lacking in real fullness, helps to distinguish them from stock types and helps them live without relying on lazzi to appear humorous. The two lovers, almost classic in their simplicity, are easily identifiable, so much so it is easy to overlook them as people. Horace is a man of action. Not for him is the contemplation and brooding of the distressed lover, and he attempts constantly to engineer Agnes' escape. His motivation is mainly self-interest, but he never forgets the background to her imprisonment, indignantly questioning the right of La Souche to treat her in such a cavalier fashion. If Horace is thought of as stupid in telling Arnolphe all his plans, this is to do him an injustice. Here Horace is a comic tool, enabling Moliere to make the most of the situation he has created. Further it gives him an admirable opportunity to stab at what he obviously considered the meaningless volubility of his contemporaries.

And thank God he chattered--
we're all the same, we Frenchmen.
A promising intrigue, we have to boast about it.
Which is as well for husbands.
I think the God of virtue made us so.²³

²³Ibid.

It is for these reasons that the character of Horace remains undeveloped. He is introduced as a deprived lover and takes his bow as a fulfilled one. This is certainly not the case in Agnes, her character involves a great deal more subtlety. In Agnes there is a distinct evolution. She appears initially as the personification of innocence; a picture shared by Arnolphe and the audience alike. However, both rapidly find that this is not the case. What has been denied Agnes in education and experience is adequately compensated for by instinct. In her position she is forced to rely entirely on her emotions to guide her. This becomes obvious as a problem unforeseen by Arnolphe. He believes firmly that a knowledge of life is the root of all evil in a person. During the play he is as much dismayed by the emergence of her emotions as he is by his own. Until her reactions force an introspective examination of his emotions, he clearly never considers emotion important. Moliere's use of Agnes' self-discovery and Arnolphe's too, verges on the symbolic. He demonstrates, principally through Agnes, that love is fundamental and cannot, nor should not, be repressed.

With the inclusion of Chrysalde, Moliere seized the opportunity to speak to the audience directly, maintaining only the barest pretense of character. Despite being a dramatic artifice, he is, nevertheless, a relatively complex character. His presence is a contradiction. He contributes nothing to the action but his purpose is manifold. He

demonstrates some of Moliere's personal doctrines and attempts to quiet Arnolphe by asking him to correct his actions. His relationship with Arnolphe is ambiguous, he is concerned for his friend's well-being yet becomes disgusted when Arnolphe will not listen to reason. Ultimately, however, he is the first to console Arnolphe after his defeat. Although on stage for a relatively short time, we identify with Chrysalde as being the same rational person we all believe ourselves to be.

Moliere obviously believed that the pseudo-intellectual pomposity of some of the characters needed to be compensated for by a little basic common sense. He achieved this with the inclusion of a certain type of servant; this can be seen in most of his plays. The servants in his plays are not merely hangovers from commedia but are, in many cases, fully developed characters. Although not developed as fully as they were to be in later plays, the servants in School for Wives do contribute a great deal to the comedy in the play. They are involved, although to no great extent, intellectually in that they make pertinent comments about the events they are drawn into. They also provide a contrast to their sophisticated superiors, retaining as they do, an element of slapstick humor.

Of the two remaining characters only one has any real significance. This is Ernique, Agnes' long-lost father. He is there by necessity, to untangle the

complications at the end of the play and provide the happy ending. The final character, Oronte, serves as a somewhat belated reinforcement to Arnolphe. The two are of the same mold, but Oronte lacks the dynamic, if misguided, strength of Arnolphe. He serves as a representative of a society that allows itself to be guided, unthinking, by the whims of a few.

The Style of the Production

The set for this production is intended to act as a link between the architectural style of the seventeenth century and the modern adaptation of the script by Miles Malleon. The simplistic setting of the original is to be replaced by a highly detailed representation of a contemporary French house. The set is to be functional in that it opens to reveal the interior of the house. This modification from the original gives a more interesting space for the actors to work in. In addition, the motivation given by an accurate, period-style setting will undoubtedly enhance the performance of the play.

The design follows the basic outline described in Mr. Malleon's script. The front of the house is built from two large, hinged flats that open to reveal a room inside the house. This change is to be accomplished by the two servants. Although stylized for both aesthetic and practical reasons the detail of the inside and outside are

based entirely upon authentic architectural examples of the period; these are blended to give an interesting and pleasing picture. The painting of the set is to be executed primarily in blues and grays to give a firm but neutral image. This is in order to allow the stronger colors of the costumes a greater quality of life and movement when viewed against their background. The costumes are not strictly period, being based upon the clothes of about 1680. This is to be done because the fashions of 1662 were elaborate in the extreme. The cleaner lines of twenty years later give a cleaner, simpler look that is more in keeping with the fashion; full wigs will be worn where necessary.

A major alteration is proposed in relation to the size of the stage on which the play will be performed. It is felt that the full width of 62 feet is too large a space for only eight actors to occupy; as they only appear collectively on two occasions and the majority of the action is supplied by two to four characters at one time. Thus, to present a more comfortable space the width of the proscenium is to be reduced to forty feet. This will be accomplished by placing decorated columns right and left. In keeping with the period feel, an act drop is to be used. This will consist of a blue drop decorated with a portrait of Moliere. Finally, to complete the period flavor, a harpsichord, positioned on the stage left side stage, will be played before the curtain rises and during scene changes

if necessary. The harpsichordist will be dressed in a period costume to complete the picture.

The entire design of the set and the costume was carefully considered in the light of both the style of the period and the modern adaptation. The result is a careful blend of the two and will enable the audience and the actors to enter, more freely, the timeless comic spirit of Moliere.

In the production of this play the director does not wish to emphasize any personal reactions to the works of Moliere. Neither is it intended to use the play as a vehicle to express any modern theories. If, for example, the play were directed as a statement of Women's Liberation, the director feels that this would upset the balance of the play, no matter how delicately it was handled. The director is aware that Moliere was making a comment, even if it is submerged under the comedy, and is prepared to allow this aspect to emerge naturally. By freeing the script from the stress of stilted translations it is hoped that the play will live with the life of a universal comedy and not, as often productions of the classics do, become a stilted period-piece.

It is the director's intention to insure that the performances be a balanced unit. The temptation to increase the slapstick element is to be resisted, as is distortion of any of the characters. Characterizations are to be presented in their correct context in that all the characters

are part of the intrinsic humor, no single character should contribute an excess.

The play is undeniably theatrical in style and this is the single most important criterion for its production. With the possible exception of Arnolphe, the characters are singularly lacking in any recognizably detailed realistic traits. While their bases are rooted in reality their actions are not. Moliere was not overly concerned with detail and trivia that are often considered mandatory for today's theatre. The actions of his creations are strong and simple. Above all he intended his audience to laugh, to enjoy the time they spent watching his plays. The director of this play intends to uphold this doctrine. The prime concern is that an audience member finds the play thoroughly enjoyable. If this happens the play will have been successful. If then the audience member looks behind the laugh and finds the thought then this will be an added bonus.

To attain this goal a high standard of performance is required. The environment in which the actors will perform has been discussed in relation to style. It would be pointless for the actors to perform in this highly stylized setting unless they blended perfectly with it. The costumes will help, but the actors' two principal tools will also need to be developed.

A strong characteristic of the period was the quality of the movement. The sophisticates of society, with

whom this play deals, had a grace and elegance that is not in evidence today. In order to insure a high quality of movement, the director enlisted the help of a graduate dance student who will work with the director and the actors to institute movement that is in keeping with the overall style of the play.

In considering the vocal demands of the play, the production is helped considerably by the removal of the static verse form, supplied by most translations. In addition to this the adaptation chosen for production eliminates the unimportant or confusing elements of the original while maintaining an admirable feeling for the quality of the play. It is intended that vocal training sessions will take place before each rehearsal, in order to raise the quality of vocal performance, important to the fast pace of comedy. The director also wishes to perform the play with an English accent (dialectic where necessary). This is intended partly to project the intended stylization and partly as a learning experience for the cast.

In conclusion it is hoped that this production will present an accurate picture of Moliere's comedy; if not in perfect style then in perfect spirit. While firm in the belief that Moliere's comedy is as fresh today as it was in seventeenth century France, the director believes that the passage of three hundred years necessitates but small changes to insure the audience enjoy fully the comic genius of Moliere's theatre.

CHAPTER II
 PROMPT BOOK FOR THE
SCHOOL FOR WIVES
Act I - Scene 1

(SCENE--OUTSIDE A HOUSE OWNED BY SEIGNEUR ARNOLPHE, IN PARIS, ABOUT 1660.

THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE IS REPRESENTED BY A FRENCH FLAT UP CENTER AND DEPICTS A LARGE DOUBLE FRONT DOOR WITH WINDOWS RIGHT AND LEFT OF IT. THERE ARE ARCHES RIGHT AND LEFT OF THE BACK RUN. THESE ARCHES ARE USED FOR ALL EXITS AND ENTRANCES TO THE STREET. THE ARCH UP LEFT IS ALSO PRESUMED TO LEAD TO THE BACK OF THE HOUSE. THERE IS A BENCH RIGHT CENTER AND BUILT-INS SEATS RIGHT AND LEFT. THIS SETTING STANDS THROUGHOUT THE PLAY. TWO WINGS ARE HINGED TO THE HOUSE PIECE RIGHT AND LEFT. THESE CAN BE OPENED OUT AND FORM SIDE WALLS OF THE ROOM FOR THE INTERIOR SCENES. WHEN THEY ARE OPEN, A WIDE ENTRANCE IS REVEALED CENTER WITH EXITS ABOVE IT TO RIGHT AND LEFT. THE EXIT TO LEFT LEADS TO THE KITCHEN AND BACK ENTRANCE; THE EXIT TO RIGHT LEADS TO THE BEDROOMS. FOR THE INTERIOR SCENES, A HINGED BACK TO THE BENCH IS RAISED, FORMING A SETTEE, AND A CHAIR IS SET LEFT CENTER. THE ACTION DURING EACH ACT IS CONTINUOUS, THE TRANSFORMATION FROM INTERIOR TO EXTERIOR BEING EFFECTED BY ALAIN AND GEORGETTE, WHO OPEN AND CLOSE THE WINGS, AND SET OR REMOVE THE CHAIR AND SETTEE BACK AS NECESSARY. [SEE FIGURE 1]

WHEN THE CURTAIN RISES SEIGNEUR ARNOLPHE, A RICH MAN, AGED ABOUT FIFTY, ENTERS THROUGH THE STAGE LEFT ARCH.)

CHRYSLALDE

(DELIVERING AS HE FOLLOWS ARNOLPHE IN. STOPS LEFT IN FRONT OF ARCH.)

Can I believe my ears? You mean to marry her?

ARNOLPHE

(CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Indeed I'm here in Paris for the wedding. But a few days and she will be my wife.

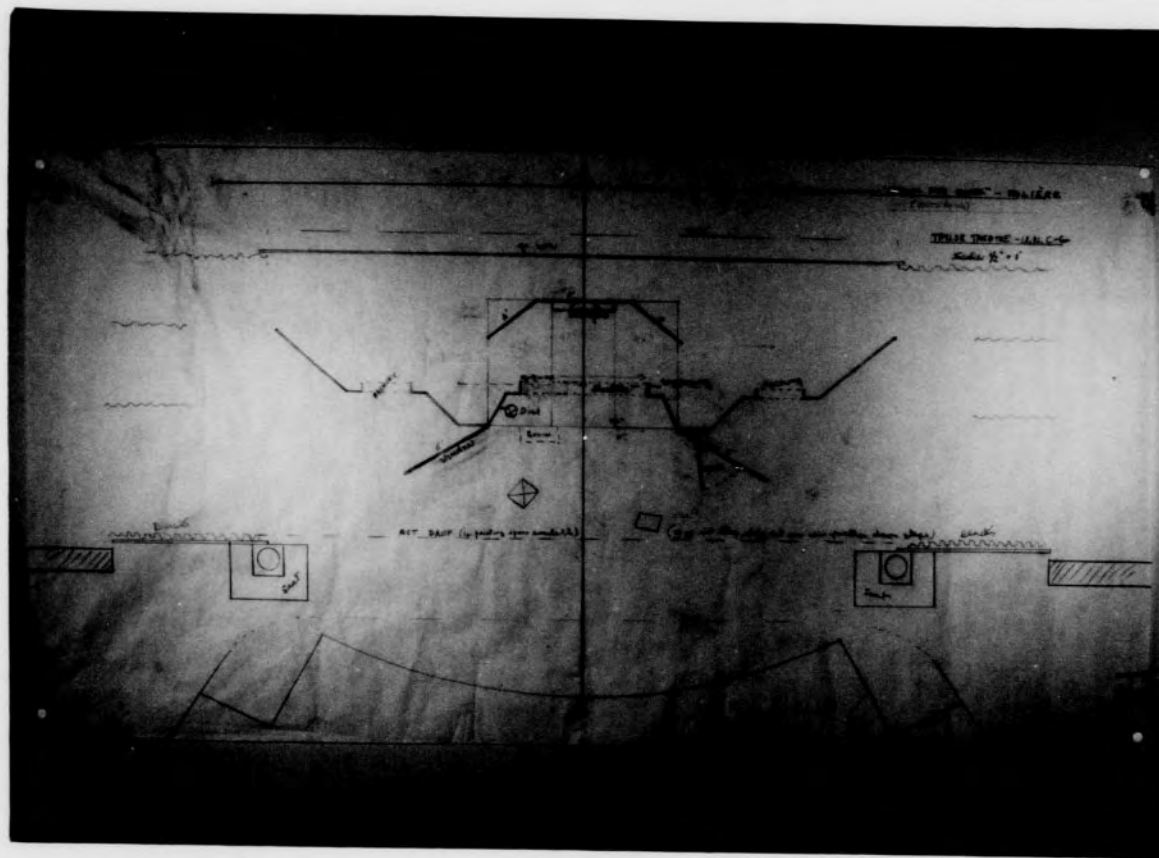


Figure 1

CHRYSLALDE

(CROSSES TO ARNOLPHE STAGE RIGHT.)

Then let me seize this opportunity--perhaps the last--to tell you what I think. And, as a friend, my dear good Arnolphe, as a friend. For anyone, at any time, to take a wife is something of a hazard. But, for you--the risk is terrible.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS LEFT TO CHRYSLALDE.)

Doubtless you speak out of your own experience. You took the hazard; and you've learned the risks.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AWAY STAGE LEFT THREE OR FOUR STEPS.)

Has your wife made you a laughing-stock? Have you the cuckold's horns?

CHRYSLALDE

No. I don't think so. In any case, I'm not aware of them.

ARNOLPHE

You will be. Make no doubt of that. They'll sprout. They'll sprout. You have 'em on the brain.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES LEFT TWO STEPS.)

It's always possible I may be made a fool of--as you say--And yet, to me, the biggest fool--as I see life, my friend--is he that lets himself be tortured; tortures himself, and suffers agonies; when in reality, the pain's quite bearable. Why turn Misfortune into Calamity? But I fear for you. I give you solemn warning. Marriage, for you, is a far greater menace, than for any other man, throughout the whole of Paris.

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES STAGE LEFT.)

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AWAY RIGHT.)

Ridiculous!

CHRYSLADE

But true.

(CHRYSLADE STEPS BACK RIGHT.)

And for this reason: all your life, you have poured scorn upon your married friends. When things went wrong with them, you've laughed; and mocked; and never spared their feelings.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES BEHIND CHRYSLADE.)

With reason; or without.

ARNOLPHE

Always with reason. Is there another city in the world where husbands suffer such indignities, and bear their miserable lot with such humility?

(ARNOLPHE STOPS CENTER STAGE, TURNS RIGHT.)

CHRYSLADE

Oh, you exaggerate!

ARNOLPHE

Indeed I don't! You are a man with eyes.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO CHRYSLADE.)

Then look about you.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO LEFT.)

Look!

(ARNOLPHE INDICATES AUDIENCE.)

What do you see?

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE CENTER, POINTING OUT RIGHT.)

There! (HE PAUSES.) There's a man making a fortune--

(ARNOLPHE DELIVERS FRONT.)

And his wife spending it for him--but with other men.

There's another. Smiling and smirking over all the presents that his wife receives. And believing her, when she assures him they are hers by right

(ARNOLPHE SLIGHT BOX.)

because she's such a noble character.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE STARTS TOWARD ARNOLPHE.)

But really . . .

ARNOLPHE

Wait!

(ARNOLPHE POINTS OUT MEMBER OF AUDIENCE.)

Here's one who actually dares to doubt her story; and make his protest--it does him little good. Gets himself told that he's insensitive.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS TO CHRYSLALDE.)

Shows a sad lack of trust. In fact, married to such as him, anything a woman does is fully justified. Better have held his tongue. And there's another.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT PAST CENTER.)

Oh, a fine fellow--the pick of the bunch. Accepts the situation. And when the lover calls, loaded with gifts, opens the door for him, takes his hat and stick and bows him welcome to a happy home.

(ARNOLPHE FULL BOW.)

Oh, these Husbands!

(CHRYSLALDE STEPS TO HALT ARNOLPHE.)

And these Wives! These Women!

(ARNOLPHE DELIVERS TO CHRYSLALDE.)

Up to every trick.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES BACK ON STAGE, UP STAGE CENTER.)

I know a wife, who takes her husband into her confidence.

(ARNOLPHE TAKES TWO STEPS UP STAGE.)

And whispers to him--all about her luckless would-be lover.
Till the poor oaf pities the other man.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT BEHIND CHRYSALDE.)

But when his back is turned--there's no-one to be pitied,
but himself. I know another wife--to explain the sums of
money that she spends, boasts that she wins "at play",
gloating on her gains, never realizes the kind of play.
Look where you will, there's matter for a laugh.

CHRYSALDE

That's what I mean.

(CHRYSALDE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT.)

And there your danger lies. I make no boast of it--merely
I find no mirth in other people's pain. I don't exult.

(CHRYSALDE CROSSES LEFT, STOPS.)

So, should I become a laughing-stock--

(CHRYSALDE DELIVERS TO ARNOLPHE.)

the phrase is yours--

(STOPS CENTER.)

maybe, they will not laugh. Even, they might be sorry for
me. But not so with you. They're waiting for you, man.
Give them the slightest pretext . . .

ARNOLPHE

But I'll not.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES STAGE LEFT, PAST CHRYSALDE.)

Don't waste your sympathy on me. There isn't any need.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO CHRYSALDE.)

They'll never get the chance to mock at me I've been too
clever for 'em. I know the risks you speak of; very well;
and knowing, laid my plans. This girl, to be my wife, is
innocent.

CHRYSLALDE

So are they all, at some time in their lives.

ARNOLPHE

Yes, but she's more than that.

CHRYSLALDE

How do?

ARNOLPHE

She's ignorant.

CHRYSLALDE

Of what?

ARNOLPHE

Of everything. She's to be taught by me.

CHRYSLALDE

Taught what?

ARNOLPHE

The things I'd have her know.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT.)

Are you to be a husband, or a school-master?

ARNOLPHE

Something of both. And my household is to be a school for wives.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS UP STAGE TO CHRYSLALDE.)

You have a charming and a clever wife.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE SLIGHT BOW.)

I'm glad you think so.

ARNOLPHE

(CHRYSALDE CROSSES UP STAGE, SITS ON BENCH.)

A clever wife's a very bad investment. You think you're safe, but never can be sure. Indeed a wife who reads and writes knows more than's good for her. She can read love-letters--and write 'em, too. I shall be well content if mine can sew and spin, look to my table, and can say her prayers.

CHRYSALDE

My God, dear friend, it all sounds very dull. A wife who's stupid!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO CHRYSALDE.)

I prefer stupidity that's all my own to Wit and Beauty that I share with others.

CHRYSALDE

Ridiculous!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO BENCH.)

But true.

(ARNOLPHE TAKES ONE STEP, STAGE LEFT.)

I've seen it all too often. If a clever woman makes up her mind--well, that's the end of it--or the beginning. They have no Principles. Except the one that suits them at the time. And that they use to put us in the wrong. Give me a fool.

CHRYSALDE

I'll say no more.

ARNOLPHE

But you can listen.

(ARNOLPHE STEPS RIGHT TO BENCH.)

I know what I'm about.

(ARNOLPHE FACES FRONT.)

I'm rich. She'll be dependent on me. Absolutely.

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON BENCH.)

And she's very sweet; and loyal; and looks up to me. I fell in love with her when she was just a child and quite adorable. She's an orphan--or, I presume she is. Would you believe it: her parents left her in some woman's charge and went abroad; arranging to have money sent which never came. And when I met them first, the woman, not having a penny of her own, was in despair. And, quite naturally, was overjoyed when I suggested I should take the child, and send her to a Convent. Which I did. Giving my instructions to the Nuns, as to her education--

CHRYSLALDE

--or her lack of it!

ARNOLPHE

The Nuns have sent her back to me, exactly as I would; A virgin page--for me to write upon. A stripling vine--for me to shape its growth.

CHRYSLALDE

She's to be scribbled on, and tied against a wall--d'you think she'll like it?

ARNOLPHE

My dear good fellow, but you miss the point. When she has learned what I shall have to teach, she'll like what I like; enjoy what I enjoy. There'll be no room for differences; for quarrels and disputes; for all the things that spoil the name of marriage. Now, d'you see my drift? A man who wants a perfect wife, must make her for himself. He'll not obtain one any other way.

CHRYSLALDE

And when, my dear fellow, can I meet the girl? This Perfect Nothingness. This lovely empty bowl--in which you mean to pour your very self, creating a personality to be the twin of yours.

ARNOLPHE

Tomorrow. You'll sup with us, tomorrow.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE RISING.)

That's very kind of you. Indeed, I thank you.

(CHRYSLALDE BOWS.)

Tomorrow--at your house.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISES.)

Not at my house. Not at the one you know.

CHRYSLALDE

What's this?

ARNOLPHE

My house in Paris is always very full. People coming and going; to be entertained; where she might learn much she is not to learn. I keep her to myself. Close. In another house. [SEE FIGURE 2]

CHRYSLALDE

Alone?

ARNOLPHE

With two servants, both as simple as she is herself.

(HE INDICATES THE FRONT DOOR UP CENTER.)

This is the place.

CHRYSLALDE

This? And what's her name?

ARNOLPHE

Agnes. Her name is Agnes; and she lives here.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO CHRYSLALDE.)



Figure 2

And that reminds me. Here I am not the "Arnolphe" that you know. My name is here "La Souche".

CHRYSLALDE

You've changed your name? Whatever for?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO CHRYSLALDE.)

For reasons of my own: "La Souche"--you'll not forget?

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES UP STAGE BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

"La Souche"--I shall remember.

ARNOLPHE

Here, then, tomorrow.

CHRYSLALDE

I can hardly wait.

ARNOLPHE

And you're the only one of all my friends

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AWAY RIGHT.)

I'd trust in such a way.

CHRYSLALDE

My good . . . Now, what's the name?

ARNOLPHE

La Souche.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE BOWS.)

My good La Souche, I prize the compliment.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE BOWS.)

It's from my heart.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE, SLIGHT BOW.)

So has its place in mine.

ARNOLPHE

Praise God we met.

CHRYSLALDE

I said Amen to that.

(CHRYSLALDE DELIVERS LINE THEN LOOKS AT ARNOLPHE TO SEE IF HE'S LOOKING.)

The Pompous Ass!

(CHRYSLALDE EXITS UP LEFT.)

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE AS CHRYSLALDE EXITS.)

The Silly Idiot!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO KNOCK ON DOOR.)

Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE OPEN OUT THE TWO WINGS OF THE SET FROM INSIDE TO SHOW THE ROOM. THEY CHANGE SCENERY. ARNOLPHE MOVES BEHIND THE LEFT WING AND KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.)

Act I - Scene 2

(SCENE--INSIDE THE HOUSE. AS THE SCENE OPENS ALAIN BOWS AND GEORGETTE CURTSIES. ALAIN RUNS TO CHAIR AND PATS HIS LAP. GEORGETTE JUMPS IN ALAIN'S LAP. ALAIN BEGINS TO CARESS AND KISS GEORGETTE.)

ARNOLPHE

(OFF; KNOCKING AND SHOUTING.)

Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!

ALAIN

(TO GEORGETTE.)

Can't you hear? There's someone knocking--open the door.

GEORGETTE

I thought you must be deaf. Open it yourself.

ALAIN

It's not my place.

GEORGETTE

Nor mine.

ARNOLPHE

(CALLING.)

Alain! Georgette!

ALAIN

The Master!

GEORGETTE

(THEY RISE.)

Quick, man--let him in.

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES UP STAGE TO FIREPLACE.)

I'm busy with my fire.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE DELIVERS FRONT, CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT TO CAGE.)

I have to mind my sparrow.

ARNOLPHE

I'm losing my patience. (HE KNOCKS.) Open! Open, I say.

ALAIN

(IN MIME; BUSY WITH THE FIRE.)

No getting it to light.

GEORGETTE

(MAKING BIRD NOISES INTO THE CAGE.)

My sweet! My pretty sweet!

ARNOLPHE

(OFF.)

One of you, or both, will pay for this.

(THEY STOP DEAD.)

The one of you who doesn't open this door for me, goes without food--and for three days.

(BOTH RUN LEFT TO DOOR. GEORGETTE TRIPS ALAIN.)

GEORGETTE

(ALAIN TRIPS GEORGETTE.)

Where are you coming to?

ALAIN

Opening the door.

GEORGETTE

It's not your place. You mind your fire.

ALAIN

(ALAIN JUMPS UP.)

The cat'll get your sparrow.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE RISES. BOTH OPEN DOOR.)

We haven't got a cat.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE ENTERS UP LEFT. HE REMOVES HAT.)

Here's a fine welcome. After a week away. Which of you's to blame?

ALAIN

(ALAIN TAKES CANE.)

Not me.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE TAKES HAT.)

Not me.

ARNOLPHE

Which of you opened it?

ALAIN

Me.

GEORGETTE

No. Me.

ALAIN

We opened it together.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE GIVES CAPE TO ALAIN.)

Enough of this. Well! And how is she?

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CURTSIES.)

Blooming.

ARNOLPHE

And has she missed me?

ALAIN

No.

ARNOLPHE

What's that? Surely you mean "yes"?

ALAIN

Yes, I mean--no.

ARNOLPHE

Eh?

GEORGETTE

Master, she's had no time.

ARNOLPHE

No time?

ALAIN

To miss you.

ARNOLPHE

What's she been doing?

GEORGETTE

Every moment of the day, Good Master, since you went away, she's been expecting you. At every sound and footstep in the street, rushing across her room, she'd throw her window wide, her eyes examined every passer-by.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT.)

Good, very good!

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES TO GEORGETTE.)

And not a Donkey, Mule or Ass went past,

(ALAIN PLACES HAND ON GEORGETTE'S SHOULDER.)

she thought it must be you.

ARNOLPHE

She's up there now?

ALAIN

She must have heard you knock.

GEORGETTE

And she'll be coming down.

ARNOLPHE

(AGNES ENTERS FROM UP LEFT TO CENTER.)

Ah! Here she is. And with her sewing, too. That's as I'd have her.

(ARNOLPHE BOWS.)

And are you well, my dear?

AGNES

(AGNES CURTSIES.)

Yes, sir. Very well.

ARNOLPHE

And happy?

AGNES

Yes. Very happy.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO AGNES, TAKES HER HAND, AND LEADS HER TO SIT IN CHAIR.)

Then I'm happy, too. You have no complaints?

AGNES

(AGNES RISES, THEN SITS.)

No, sir. Except my bed.

ARNOLPHE

Your bed? What's wrong with it?

AGNES

You see, I get no rest..

ARNOLPHE

No rest? For Heaven's sake, my child, what d'ye mean?

AGNES

I hardly like to say.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES BEHIND CHAIR, CROSSES RIGHT DOWN CENTER TO GEORGETTE AND ALAIN.)

What can she mean?

GEORGETTE

Well, good Master--you can be assured there's no-one with her, to disturb her rest.

AGNES

If there were only one!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO AGNES.)

Only one?

AGNES

But there are so many.

ARNOLPHE

Many!

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES RIGHT TO AGNES.)

What are you talking of?

AGNES

Fleas.

GEORGETTE

Fleas!

ALAIN

Fleas!

(ALAIN CROSSES RIGHT TO GEORGETTE.) [SEE FIGURE 3]

ARNOLPHE

Oh! How you frightened me. For one awful moment, I was afraid . . .

AGNES

Afraid! Afraid of what? Why should you be afraid?

ARNOLPHE

Oh, no matter--and no need to ask. I love your innocence. Forget the fleas. Remember very soon I shall be there to catch 'em.

AGNES

I shall be glad of that.

ARNOLPHE

I make no doubt you will.

AGNES

They'll take you all your time.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE DELIVERS FIRST OF LINE, PAUSES, LOOKS AT ALAIN AND GEORGETTE, THEN FINISHES LINE.)

My pretty sweet--perhaps not all of it. (HE INDICATES HER SEWING.) What have we here?

AGNES

A new night cap, Sir; for you.



Figure 3

ARNOLPHE

I shall look well in it.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT BEHIND CHAIR.)

Now, back to your room..

(AGNES RISES AND CROSSES TO CENTER.)

Before I go this evening, I shall have much to tell you of the wedding; and how you're to behave.

(ARNOLPHE BOWS DEEP, AGNES CURTSIES.)

Oh, you look lovely.

(AFTER LINE, AGNES EXITS UP CENTER. ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO FRONT STAGE, PACES THROUGHOUT SPEECH.)

Oh, Ladies! Dear sweet ladies who know so much of Life. With all your learning, all your cleverness, your Wit, your wiles, your genius for intrigue, your beauty, your attractiveness--all that's as nothing to me--nothing--against the simple modesty of this dear girl, I mean to make my wife--to be my Other Self.

(AFTER LINE ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP CENTER RIGHT. GEORGETTE GIVES ARNOLPHE HIS HAT AND CANE. ARNOLPHE EXITS. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CHANGE SCENERY.)

Act I - Scene 3

(SCENE--OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. AS THE SCENE OPENS, HORACE ENTERS LEFT, CROSSES TO FRONT STAGE, AND LOOKS AROUND. THE COAST IS CLEAR. GOES UP TO PEER IN WINDOW UP RIGHT. ARNOLPHE ENTERS UP LEFT, CROSSES DOWN FRONT RIGHT OF HORACE.)

HORACE

(TURNING, SEEING ARNOLPHE.)

Surely, it's Seigneur Arnolphe!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STOPPING.)

That is, or was, my name.

HORACE

(HORACE BOWS DEEPLY.)

Good Seigneur Arnolphe.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE BOWS DEEPLY.)

Young sir! Although I must confess I don't know who you are.

HORACE

Oh yes, you do. You knew my father well.

ARNOLPHE

Your father.

HORACE

And my name is Horace.

ARNOLPHE

It isn't.

HORACE

It is.

ARNOLPHE

(THEY EMBRACE.)

My old friend's son.

HORACE

He often speaks of you.

ARNOLPHE

He's often in my thoughts.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND HORACE, LOOKING HIM OVER.
STOPS UP STAGE RIGHT CENTER.)

Well, well and well! Last time I saw you, you were half
the size. I make no doubt you've heard as much before.

HORACE

It's the way that every elder starts a conversation.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO HORACE.)

Oh, but I'm glad to see you.

(ARNOLPHE TAKING HIM DOWNSTAGE.)

How long have you been in Paris?

HORACE

Nine days. And the first hour of the first day I visited your house. But they knew nothing of you.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TAKES THREE STEPS STAGE LEFT.)

I've been away on business, in the country. Now tell me of your father. Is he well?

HORACE

Yes. Very.

ARNOLPHE

As young as ever?

HORACE

Younger.

ARNOLPHE

He makes a mock of Time. Defying age.

HORACE

I have a letter for you from him.

ARNOLPHE

(HORACE HANDS LETTER TO ARNOLPHE.)

Give it to me.

HORACE

I had a letter from him yesterday; saying he hoped to join me.

ARNOLPHE

That's good news.

HORACE

He mentioned, too, a mutual friend of yours.

ARNOLPHE

A mutual friend?

HORACE

Who's made a fortune in America.

ARNOLPHE

America! Where's that?

HORACE

It's where he's made a fortune.

ARNOLPHE

Does your father mention his name?

HORACE

(HORACE CONSULTS HIS LETTER.)

"Enrique".

ARNOLPHE

Enrique! I don't remember. He asks me here to treat you as a son. I'd have done that, without the asking.

(ARNOLPHE PUTS LETTER IN HIS POCKET.)

And to show I mean it--is there anything, in any way, that I can do for you?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

I'm short of money.

ARNOLPHE

How much do you want?

HORACE

A hundred pistoles.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TAKES HIS PURSE FROM HIS POCKET AND HANDS IT TO HORACE.)

Here's two hundred.

HORACE

(HORACE PUTS THE PURSE IN HIS POCKET.)

Oh, sir! To be repaid you, when my father comes.

ARNOLPHE

Of course, of course. I'm very grateful that you took me at my word.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO HORACE.)

And this is your first visit?

HORACE

Yes.

ARNOLPHE

Well, what do you think of us? And how does Paris strike you?

HORACE

It's very full of people.

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE.)

Some of the buildings are magnificent. And, I should imagine, that a man--with money in his purse--

(HORACE CROSSES BACK UP STAGE TO ARNOLPHE.)

could lead a perfect life.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES STAGE RIGHT BEHIND HORACE.)

That's very true. For here, a man may satisfy his every appetite. For food; for Art; for learning; and for Love. You'll find our women most accessible, blonde and brunette alike. And the husbands, too. Just as accommodating. For they'll not interfere. Things happen here in Paris every day fit for a story-book. Nine days you've been here. Nothing started yet. You disappoint me. You're a young man to catch a woman's eye.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES ONE STEP TO ARNOLPHE.)

Well--to tell the truth--you rather drag it from me, something has started.

ARNOLPHE

Oh! It has?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT PAST CENTER.)

I think I must be the luckiest man on earth.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS LEFT.)

Hey, hey, what's this?

HORACE

I've lost my heart.

ARNOLPHE

You call that lucky!

HORACE

(HORACE TURNS TO FACE ARNOLPHE RIGHT.)

Yes. For I have another in exchange. And she has mine.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE DELIVERS FRONT RIGHT.)

Oh, good; very good.

HORACE

(HORACE FRONT RIGHT.)

Her heart in me, fills me with ecstasy,

(HORACE STEPS DOWN STAGE.)

and then I have to hold her very close, to hear my own heart beat.

ARNOLPHE

You're doing very well. You'll be another history for my case-book.

HORACE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER.)

Please; if I tell you, you'll keep it to yourself.

ARNOLPHE

Of course, of course.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Strangely, the whole thing came about almost by chance. Quite by chance, I saw her.

(HORACE CROSSES BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

I couldn't believe my eyes. Such dazzling loveliness. I acknowledged her beauty--as anyone would--and she responded.

ARNOLPHE

What did you expect?

HORACE

(HORACE PUTS RIGHT FOOT ON COLUMN.)

Oh, but so simply; and so naturally--as one would wish a woman to, and they so seldom do--and then, before she took my heart, she took my breath away. Asked me to visit her. Which I have done. Beyond all reason, the affair progresses.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, this is splendid! You must tell me more. Who is she? What's her name? And where does she live?

HORACE

Agnes. Her name is Agnes--and she lives here.

ARNOLPHE

Merciful God!

HORACE

(HORACE RUNS TO ARNOLPHE AND LEADS HIM TO COLUMN.)

Good sir, you're ill!

ARNOLPHE

A twinge. A touch of giddiness.

(ARNOLPHE SITS AT COLUMN BASE.)

I'll just sit here. It'll pass. It's nothing serious. At least I hope it isn't! Tell me more.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSING LEFT.)

As it turned out, my little Beautiful--if you could see her, oh, she's exquisite.

ARNOLPHE

Oh!

HORACE

(HORACE TURNS TO ARNOLPHE.)

Sir?

ARNOLPHE

Another twinge.

HORACE

Well, this Simplicity and Naturalness I told you of--

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE AND SITS.)

is simply Ignorance.

(HORACE TURNS AWAY RIGHT.)

There's some old man--can you imagine such stupidity--who shields her from the world. God! He must be a fool.

ARNOLPHE

Oh!

HORACE

Dear sir . . .

ARNOLPHE

I have a cramp. Go on, go on, go on.

HORACE

Somehow this Ignorance gives her added charm. It seems a pity that she has to learn.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE HALF RISES.)

Aah!

HORACE

Sir, you're in pain . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE SITS.)

A touch of gout. But tell me: this old fool--you've seen him?

HORACE

Indeed I've not. Nor am I likely to. His name's La Souche-- not that it matters. I've made up my mind. Here is this lovely jewel of a girl; I'll not leave her to Methuselah-- I'll have her for myself

(HORACE STEPS UP STAGE.)

and the two hundred pistoles that you let me have, will make that possible.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISES, CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.)

Ow!

HORACE

Sir! What's the matter?

ARNOLPHE

The wind. I have the wind.

HORACE

I hardly like to leave you here alone.

ARNOLPHE

I'd rather you didn't wait. I shall stay here awhile; and then go home.

HORACE

You'll keep it to yourself?

ARNOLPHE

The wind?

HORACE

What I have told you.

ARNOLPHE

Indeed I will.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT IN FRONT OF ARNOLPHE.)

Not even tell my father. He might disapprove.

ARNOLPHE

You can trust me--as far as I'll trust you.

HORACE

(HORACE BOWS.)

Next time we meet, and make no doubt of it,

(HORACE BEGINS EXIT UP STAGE LEFT.)

I shall have more to tell.

ARNOLPHE

Aah!

HORACE

(HORACE STOPS AND TURNS RIGHT.)

You spoke?

ARNOLPHE

No. Only belched.

HORACE

If there's a wiser man in all of Paris than Seigneur Arnolphe, I'd like to meet him.

(HORACE EXITS.)

Oh! That fool La Souche!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO

Thank God he's gone. I couldn't have contained myself a moment longer.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES CENTER.)

We're all the same, we Frenchmen. A promising intrigue, we have to boast about it.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT, PAST CENTER.)

Which is as well for husbands. I think the God of Virtue made us so. Oh, why did I let him go before he told me more? I may be glad he's gone, but I've yet to know how far he may have gone. Now, let me think.

(ARNOLPHE PACING.)

What did he say? That she'd invited him; he'd been received. Why, then the servants must have let him in. The treacherous couple! The rascal pair! My, God, I'll deal with them.

(ARNOLPHE CUTS DIAGONALLY RIGHT UP STAGE TO DOOR, SHOUTING.)

Alain! Georgette! Georgette!

Act I - Scene 4

(SCENE--EXTERIOR OF HOUSE.)

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE AT DOOR.)

Georgette! Alain!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES STAGE RIGHT.)

Where are you both?

(ALAIN PEERS THROUGH ARCH, STAGE LEFT.)

Alain! Alain! Where are you?

ALAIN

(ALAIN STEPS DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

Master, did you call?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE CENTER.)

What d'you think I'm doing? Talking to myself? Where's the other one? (HE YELLS.) Georgette!

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE COMING OUT OF DOOR.)

Did I hear your voice?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES STAGE LEFT.)

I shouldn't be surprised.

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CROSS UP STAGE RIGHT BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

And you'll hear more of it. Come here; the pair of you.
Here. Here! In front of me.

GEORGETTE

What's the matter with him?

ALAIN

He's swallowed a tiger.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RAISING CANE, BACKING THEM STAGE RIGHT.)

That's enough! No muttering. While I'm talking you can hold
your tongues--you'll have enough to answer for, after I've
done with you.

ALAIN

Master, what is it?

GEORGETTE

What can we have done?

ARNOLPHE

What is it? What have you done? Which of you disobeyed me,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING RIGHT BEHIND THEM.)

while I've been away? Which of you? Eh? Or both?

(ARNOLPHE STOPPING RIGHT.)

Or have you agreed together in deceit?

GEORGETTE

Deceit? Not me!

ALAIN

Nor me!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

A man's been here.

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE LOOK AT EACH OTHER. ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO THEM.)

Ah! I saw! I saw! You looked at one another. Guilty! The pair of you.

(ARNOLPHE CHASES ALAIN DOWN STAGE LEFT TO COLUMN.)

Oh, you damned rascal!

(ARNOLPHE CHASES GEORGETTE UP STAGE RIGHT TO BENCH.)

Oh, you wicked slut! I'll skin you both alive. Which of you let him in? Which was it? You? Or you? You, Georgette? Was it you? I'll get it out of you. What! Have you lost your voice? Say something! Say something, woman, or I'll wring your neck.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE FALLS TO BENCH.)

I think I'm going to faint.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO ALAIN.)

Well! You?

ALAIN

(ALAIN FALLS TO COLUMN.)

I've come over queer.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT TO WALL.)

And I can't get my breath.

(ARNOLPHE TURNING BACK AROUND.)

I knew him in his cradle. Then, as a school-boy. Now, a man--who's stolen from me everything I have. Has he--or hasn't he? I shall go mad unless I know what happened.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT TO ALAIN. ALAIN JUMPS UP.)

Go and tell Agnes to come down to me. No! Don't!

(ALAIN SITS DOWN.)

You'd give her warning--and I'll none o' that. I'll go myself. And take her by surprise. The truth!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO DOOR.)

I'll have the truth.

(ARNOLPHE STOPPING AT DOOR.)

Oh, how I dread to hear it. Agnes, are you there?

(ARNOLPHE EXITS.)

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE RISES AND CROSSES LEFT CENTER.)

Well! What a to-do!

ALAIN

(ALAIN RISES AND CROSSES UP STAGE BEHIND GEORGETTE.)

It's that young feller. He's the trouble--and I said he would be.

GEORGETTE

But what's the fuss about? Why does he want to keep the girl shut up? This house is like a cage. That's what it is, a kind of human cage, as if she was some kind of animal. And yet, she's not for show. Why does he get the Jumps-and-Jitters if anyone comes near?

ALAIN

(ALAIN TAKES TWO STEPS DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Because he's jealous.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE FOLLOWING HIM.)

What's he jealous for?

ALAIN

Because he's jealous--that's the way he is.

GEORGETTE

But why?

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES DOWN STAGE.)

It's Jealousy, good woman, gives the Jumps-and-Jitters,

(ALAIN SITS FRONT STAGE.)

Stops you enjoyin' life.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES DOWN STAGE AND SITS WITH ALAIN.)

It don't make sense to me.

ALAIN

Put it like this: if you was hungry, with a plate o' soup;
and someone comes along, as hungry as you, and puts his
spoon in--wouldn't you be cross?

GEORGETTE

Of course I should.

ALAIN

Well, there you are. A wife's a plate o' soup. And who
wants another feller, dippin' 'is fingers in?

GEORGETTE

Some men don't seem to mind.

ALAIN

It isn't everyone's as greedy as a pig wantin' 'is dish entirely to 'imself, allowin' nobody even a sniff at it.

ARNOLPHE

(OFF.)

Agnes come down here.

GEORGETTE

He's coming back. I'm off.

ALAIN

Me, too.

(GEORGETTE AND ALAIN CHANGE SCENERY TO INTERIOR. THEY EXIT.)

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE ENTERS FROM UP STAGE LEFT INTERIOR.)

A Greek Philosopher--I forget his name--once gave a Roman Emperor--

(ARNOLPHE PACING THROUGHOUT, DIAGONALLY UP AND DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Augustus Caesar I believe it was--some very sound advice. Whenever anything occurred to put him in a rage, just to repeat the Alphabet--to give him time to cool, and not do anything he'd be sorry for. That's what I've done now--

(ARNOLPHE STOPS BEHIND CHAIR.)

I've said the Alphabet five times. I'm not quite cool. But cool enough to tell Agnes to come down here and have a talk with me. A most unusual talk. It won't be easy--learning the truth from her; without her learning what I'm trying to learn.

(AGNES OFF STAGE.)

Oh! There she is. God grant my worst suspicions may be laid to rest. For if they're not--then, that's the end of me--
I shall be laid to rest.

(AGNES ENTERS UP STAGE CENTER.)

Ah, there you are, my dear. Sit down,

(AGNES SITS STAGE LEFT STOOL.)

and I'll sit here.

(ARNOLPHE SITS CHAIR RIGHT.)

What a fine day it is.

AGNES

Yes. Very fine.

ARNOLPHE

Yes. Any news?

AGNES

News?

ARNOLPHE

Anything happened while I've been away?

AGNES

What should have happened?

ARNOLPHE

Er--yes--what indeed?

AGNES

My kitten died.

ARNOLPHE

Oh dear, that's very sad. But cats are mortal, like the rest of us.

AGNES

Yes, but it was a kitten not a cat.

ARNOLPHE

You must have another.

AGNES

No. Not yet. I'd like a dog.

ARNOLPHE

Then you shall have a dog.

AGNES

A little dog.

ARNOLPHE

A little dog. How hot it is.

(ARNOLPHE RISES AND CROSSES IN FRONT OF CHAIR.)

AGNES

Yes. Very hot.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE BEHIND CHAIR.)

Hasn't it rained at all?

AGNES

On and off.

ARNOLPHE

You've not been out?

AGNES

Oh, no.

ARNOLPHE

You've stayed indoors?

AGNES

Of course. You told me to.

ARNOLPHE

You've not been dull?

AGNES

Oh, no. I've not been dull.

ARNOLPHE

You haven't?

AGNES

No.

ARNOLPHE

I'm glad to hear it. What have you found to do?

AGNES

Six night shirts.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND AGNES, TOUCHING HER SHOULDER.)

Agnes, my child--the world is very strange.

AGNES

Oh yes, it is.

ARNOLPHE

You think so?

AGNES

If you say it is.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TAKES TWO STEPS STAGE LEFT.)

Oh, yes--of course. People talk scandal.

AGNES

Scandal? What's that?

ARNOLPHE

What people talk.

AGNES

I like to hear them.

ARNOLPHE

I hope you don't like scandal?

AGNES

I don't know what it is.

ARNOLPHE

I'll tell you.

(ARNOLPHE STEPS RIGHT, INTO AGNES.)

It's very simple. For instance, a neighbour told me that, while I was away, a young man came to see you; here; in this house. And you received him. That's scandal! You see what stupid make-believe it is.

(ARNOLPHE STEPS AWAY LEFT.)

I laid a wager with him that it wasn't true.

AGNES

Oh, heavens, don't do that. You'd lose your money.

ARNOLPHE

You mean there was a man, here, in the house?

AGNES

He was scarcely ever out of it.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

God give me patience!

AGNES

You're not angry?

ARNOLPHE

No. No. Not angry--not yet. Taken aback.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES FURTHER LEFT.)

Oh, surely, such frankness must mean innocence.

AGNES

I didn't hear.

ARNOLPHE

You weren't intended to.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT CENTER.)

If I remember right

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE BESIDE AGNES.)

I forbade you, definitely, to see anyone.

AGNES

You don't know why he came.

ARNOLPHE

No--but I can guess.

AGNES

Oh, no, you never could.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO CHAIR.)

Tell me what happened.

AGNES

From the beginning?

ARNOLPHE

From the beginning.

AGNES

Well--I was out on my balcony . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO AGNES.)

What were you doing there?

AGNES

Sewing--and a young man came by.

ARNOLPHE

Below you in the street?

AGNES

Oh, such a handsome fine young man he was.

ARNOLPHE

What then?

AGNES

I dropped my sewing, and jumped up to have a better look. And when he saw I'd noticed him he raised his hat; and bowed. Not wishing to be less polite, I did the same--at least, I raised my skirt, and curtsied.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AWAY RIGHT.)

Oh, you did!

AGNES

Of course. The Nuns taught me always to be polite. And then he bowed again, again I curtsied--and a third time he bowed, so graceful, and so low--his hat was in the mud.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO CHAIR.)

The young coxcomb!

AGNES

Is that what he was? Coxcombs are very nice.

ARNOLPHE

And after the bowing?

AGNES

Then he went away.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE SITS.)

Away?

AGNES

Only to come back; and wave; and kiss his hand.

ARNOLPHE

Ah!

AGNES

No need to worry; I was not outdone. I did the same. And more--and if the Evening hadn't come, and Darkness hidden him, we'd have been at it still.

ARNOLPHE

At what?

AGNES

Throwing kisses.

ARNOLPHE

And that was all?

AGNES

That was all for then.

ARNOLPHE

What next?

AGNES

Next day?

ARNOLPHE

Yes, the next day.

AGNES

Even more wonderful!

ARNOLPHE

Go on, go on.

AGNES

You are impatient. Do you like my story?

ARNOLPHE

Yes, but get on with it.

AGNES

Well.

(AGNES RISES AND CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT TO DOOR.)

I was standing by this door--and it was open--I wasn't in the street; indeed I wasn't--not with either foot. But as I stood here, just inside the room, a strange old woman came along the road, and when she reached me, stopped; and spoke to me.

ARNOLPHE

What did she say?

AGNES

"The good God bless you, dear," she said, "Long may your beauty last." She called me beautiful!

ARNOLPHE

And so you are--to me; that's all that matters.

(ARNOLPHE RISES AND CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT TO AGNES.)

AGNES

Oh, no, I was to him--he told me so.

ARNOLPHE

You shouldn't have listened.

AGNES

Not listen! When he said such lovely things. Nor to you either?

ARNOLPHE

Of course, listen to me!

AGNES

But if I'm beautiful to you, why not to him? Won't you explain?

ARNOLPHE

No. Not now--on with your story.

AGNES

Where was I? Oh yes, of course--I haven't finished what the woman said. "Your beauty wasn't given you," she said,

(AGNES CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

"to make ill use of it." And then she told me I'd been very cruel; and I'd wounded one who'd never done me harm.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS DOWN STAGE.)

Oh, what wickedness!

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT TO STOOL.)

But what had I done? I asked her what I'd done. I'd done great harm, she said, to that young man.

ARNOLPHE

Him!

AGNES

Yes--him! "That innocent, well-intentioned gentleman," she said, I'd smiled at from my balcony. Oh, I was near distraught. Had I dropped something on him, without knowing it? And what do you think she said--it was my eyes. A glance from them had dealt the fatal blow--

(AGNES SITS.)

that's what she said. My eyes had, deep within them, a fearful power to pierce another's heart--and the young man was dying.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AWAY LEFT.)

Dying!

AGNES

Yes. Dying. Think of that. I said, I couldn't bear it if he died. She said, I needn't worry. His life was in my hands--You can imagine what I said.

ARNOLPHE

No, I can't.

AGNES

Well--you know I can't endure to see things suffer. No matter what. When I think of my poor kitten, I still cry.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES BEHIND AGNES DURING HER SPEECH.)

I can't even bear to see a chicken killed. And this young man--this beautiful young man--I asked what I could do--and it was all so simple. All that he wanted was to come and see me, to hold my hand; and look into my eyes--for only they could heal the wound they'd dealt. Oh, I was so relieved. I said he was to come as quickly as he could. And I'd do everything I could to make him well.

ARNOLPHE

What did you do?

AGNES

Why, everything he asked.

ARNOLPHE

What did he ask?

AGNES

Oh, the strangest things. You'd never guess--you'd never think of them. You'd laugh.

ARNOLPHE

I doubt it!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT AND SITS IN CHAIR.)

Oh, no modesty. No decent holding back.

AGNES

What's modesty? And why should I hold back?

ARNOLPHE

Oh, God forgive me--I've brought this on myself.

AGNES

What's the matter, sir? You seem put out. Have I done wrong, behaving as I did?

ARNOLPHE

Yes.

AGNES

Yes?

ARNOLPHE

No.

AGNES

No?

ARNOLPHE

I don't know what to say. I don't know yet what happened.
You must tell me.

AGNES

I'm trying to.

ARNOLPHE

You were alone with him.

AGNES

Yes. Yes. I was.

ARNOLPHE

What did he do?

AGNES

The moment that he saw me, he seemed so strong and well--and fit for anything.

ARNOLPHE

I'm asking what he did.

AGNES

I'll tell you in a moment. But if you knew the presents that he brought; and all the money that he gave Alain--and Georgette, too, you'd be as fond of him as we are.

ARNOLPHE

My feelings for him now are strong enough.

AGNES

(AGNES JUMPS UP.)

Are they! I'm so glad.

ARNOLPHE

Go on.

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSES RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

First, he swore he loved me. Loved me! He'd only seen me once. But he swore to me no other girl in all the world had ever been so loved, as he loved me.

ARNOLPHE

Ridiculous!

AGNES

I didn't think so. For when he said it,

(AGNES CROSSING LEFT CENTER.)

I felt the strangest things. A kind of tingling--starting in my toes--up to my finger tips--all thro' and thro'. I think I've never felt such happiness.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, this is Misery!

(ARNOLPHE, RISING, CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

When every revelation gives her pleasure, and me pain.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE BEHIND CHAIR.)

There's nothing for it, I must probe some more.

(AGNES CROSSES RIGHT TO CHAIR AND SITS.)

My dear sweet child--besides this talk, this silly, idle talk,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES BEHIND AGNES.)

did he do anything?

(AGNES SMILES.)

What are you smiling at?

AGNES

The things he did.

ARNOLPHE

Now for it.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT.)

Now! Did he make love to you?

AGNES

"Make love?"

ARNOLPHE

Did he caress and kiss you?

AGNES

Oh yes, he did. He took my hand, and kissed it.

(AGNES TURNS FRONT.)

Then, all up my arm--and kissed behind my neck--I thought I should have died. And he enjoyed it, too. I thought he'd never stop. All up and down he went. Time after time.

ARNOLPHE

What more?

AGNES

No!

ARNOLPHE

Heaven be merciful. You must tell the truth.

AGNES

I can't.

ARNOLPHE

Why not?

AGNES

You might be vexed with me.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, no.

AGNES

I think you would.

ARNOLPHE

Let me know the worst.

AGNES

Promise you won't be cross. I gave him--or at least he took . . . No. You'd be angry.

ARNOLPHE

I can't suffer more.

AGNES

I couldn't help it. I didn't want to. I felt it would be wrong, unfair to you. There was just nothing I could do but let him have his way.

ARNOLPHE

Listen, my child.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES STAGE RIGHT TO AGNES.)

Tell me--in your own words--what happened. What was it that he took?

AGNES

The ribbon from my hair. The one you gave me. Please, don't be cross.

ARNOLPHE

He did nothing more?

AGNES

Was there more to do? I'd have done anything. He pinned it on his coat, told me he'd wear it always--and was gone.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT BEHIND CHAIR.)

What an escape! All this, my dearest child, comes from your innocence. I'll say no more about it.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO AGNES.)

We can forget it.

AGNES

Forget!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TAKES HER HAND.)

This naughty fellow sought to turn your head, to flatter and deceive--and laugh at you.

AGNES

I know it wasn't that. He told me so, at least a score of times.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE KISSING HER HAND.)

And you believed him! What a touching faith. It's worthy of an angel.

(ARNOLPHE PUTS HER HAND DOWN.)

But the world we live in isn't Heaven. Now, pay attention, please. To listen to a Jackanapes like him--

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND CHAIR, THEN CROSSES CENTER.)

to accept his presents--let him kiss you--and, worst of all--to like it! That tingling in the toes, you speak of-- It's a Sin!

AGNES

A Sin?

ARNOLPHE

A Mortal Sin.

AGNES

How can it be?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT BEHIND STOOL.)

Good men have known it since the world began.

AGNES

But the Nuns told me Sin was ugly. This was beautiful.

ARNOLPHE

An Offence to Heaven. Death to the body. Damnation to the soul.

AGNES

You frighten me. I'll never kiss again. Not anyone. Not him. Not you.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AWAY LEFT.)

Oh Lord, I've overdone it. My child, you're growing up. You're old enough to know the facts of life--

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT BEHIND STOOL.)

or some of them. It's true, that kissing and caressing and the rest of it,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TWO STEPS.)

can be a source of pleasure--some people find it so--indeed I do myself. But such things must be done, respectably.

AGNES

What's that?

ARNOLPHE

In other words,

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON STOOL.)

when you are married, there's no harm in it.

AGNES

Let me be married soon.

ARNOLPHE

That's why I'm here.

AGNES

When shall we be married?

ARNOLPHE

Tomorrow.

AGNES

(AGNES JUMPS UP AND RUNS DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Tomorrow. Oh, I'm so happy.

(AGNES CROSSES UP STAGE TO ARNOLPHE.)

Oh, you're so good to me. I'd like to kiss you. May I?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

But, of course.

AGNES

It's not a Sin?

ARNOLPHE

No.

AGNES

I'm not married yet.

ARNOLPHE

Marriage is near enough to make a kiss quite safe.

(AGNES GIVES HIM A KISS, TURNING HIS HEAD AWAY.)

AGNES

Oh, I'm so grateful.

(AGNES PUTS HER HEAD ON HIS SHOULDER.)

I think the facts of life are wonderful. He'll be grateful, too.

ARNOLPHE

Eh? What was that? What did you say?

AGNES

He'll be grateful, too.

ARNOLPHE

He? Who?

AGNES

The Coxcomb.

ARNOLPHE

What's he got to do with it. You're going to marry me.

AGNES

You! Oh, no. Not you?

ARNOLPHE

But this is wickedness. This time there's no excuse. You must be taught a lesson. Listen, my lady--

(ARNOLPHE BACKING AGNES UP RIGHT.)

You've seen the last of him.

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

Oh no, I haven't. He's coming here today.

ARNOLPHE

Is he? I'm glad to hear it.

(ARNOLPHE FOLLOWING HER.)

When he comes, you'll open the door to him--

AGNES

Oh! Yes!

ARNOLPHE

--and slam it in his face.

AGNES

He'd only stay and knock.

ARNOLPHE

Then up to your room--out on your balcony--and throw stones at him.

AGNES

Stones?

ARNOLPHE

You'll find a pile of loose bricks under the window-sill.

AGNES

Oh, no, I couldn't. I shouldn't have the heart. Besides, I want to see him.

ARNOLPHE

Go to your room.

AGNES

I won't throw stones.

ARNOLPHE

You'll do what you're told. I'm Master here. If you learn nothing else, in this first lesson, at least, you can learn that. (AGNES WEEPS.) And don't start crying. Quiet, d'ye hear me. Quiet! I won't have you miserable,

(ARNOLPHE EXITS UP STAGE. AGNES RUNS AFTER HIM.)

if I have to thrash you for it.

(THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

Act II - Scene 1

(SCENE--INSIDE THE HOUSE. ARNOLPHE, GEORGETTE, ALAIN AND AGNES ENTER DURING BLACKOUT. ARNOLPHE IS SITTING ON STOOL LEFT, AGNES IS SITTING ON CHAIR RIGHT EMBROIDERING, GEORGETTE IS BEHIND CHAIR, AND ALAIN IS LEFT OF ARNOLPHE.)

ARNOLPHE

Well, I must say--You've followed my instructions, all of you, with great success.

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

The enemy's defeated. A very bright young spark has been extinguished. Between the four of us--we've put him out.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

Oh, the young devil! That's what they are--he, and his kind. I know 'em well. Devils! Disguised as fops. With handsome faces, under handsome hats; and well-built bodies, under well-cut clothes.

(ARNOLPHE TO ALAIN AND GEORGETTE.)

But in their coloured shoes--the cloven hoof. And while I was away--one of 'em came knocking at your door--even had hold of you. My blood runs cold. But you escaped.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AND CROSSES UP STAGE TO ALAIN AND GEORGETTE.)

With flying colours.

(ARNOLPHE TO AGNES.)

I saw you throw that brick at him. Well thrown! You hit him on the shoulder. And bruised more than that--I'm quite sure of that. I've never seen a man look so surprised. One glance at you--And then he stooped to pick up what you'd thrown and thrown at him. He held it in his hand--and stood there, gazing at it. I laughed out loud. I laughed so much I couldn't see the end. I was at the window, watching. I thought he'd hear me, so I came away. And now, I want a word with her alone--

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE BEGIN EXIT UP STAGE.)

so off you go.

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

You can trust us, Master. Your word is law. We're only simple folk--we was deceived.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES TO THEM.)

That's what we was--deceived.

ALAIN

And we was more than that. Cheated, we was.

GEORGETTE

That's what we was. Oh, we was cheated.

ALAIN

He gave us both a Crown.

GEORGETTE

Mine was a bad 'un.

ARNOLPHE

Well, be off with you. Go and prepare the supper I arranged.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CURTSIES.)

Aye, that I will.

ARNOLPHE

My best friend's coming. And so serve it well.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES UP STAGE TO INTERIOR.)

It shall be served as if you were a King.

ARNOLPHE

And so I am. This household is my Kingdom.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE EXITS UP RIGHT.)

God save us all!

ARNOLPHE

You; fetch me my Notary.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP RIGHT.)

He has his office down in the Square.

ALAIN

(ALAIN MOVES LEFT TO EXIT.)

I know the place.

ARNOLPHE

I want him here as quick as he can come.

ALAIN

(ALAIN EXITS LEFT.)

I'll have him here quicker than that.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO AGNES.)

Now, my dear. No need to go on sewing. Put it aside, and pay attention.

(AGNES STOPS SEWING, BUT KEEPS HER EYES DOWNCAST.)

Well, let's see your face.

(AGNES RAISES HER HEAD.)

That' right. You can hear better, when you look at me.
And I can see you're listening. Now . . .

(ARNOLPHE TAKES HER EMBROIDERY AND PUTS IN ON STOOL LEFT.)

Oh, put the damned stuff away! Now--What was I going to say? Oh, yes! We're to be married. I wonder if you realize how fortunate you are.

AGNES

Yes, I think I do.

ARNOLPHE

Thinking's not enough. What were you when we met? When first you saw me?

AGNES

I was six.

ARNOLPHE

A child.

AGNES

Yes; but I remember.

ARNOLPHE

A little village child--living in poverty.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND STOOL.)

AGNES

I remember that, too.

ARNOLPHE

What are you now? or rather, what will you be tomorrow?

AGNES

Shall I be any different?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STANDS BEHIND STOOL.)

Of course! You'll be my wife. A rich man's wife.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

From Poverty to Wealth, from Want to Plenty--from Over-work to Leisure.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS TO AGNES.)

All that you owe to me.

AGNES

Oh yes, I know.

ARNOLPHE

Well--don't forget it. That's all I want to say.

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON STOOL AND MOVES EMBROIDERY TO THE FLOOR.)

Oh, no there's one thing more. Some men there are who marry country wives for something of a change--after a mis-spent youth. Promiscuous rioting. Not so with me. Oh, it could have been. Make no mistake of that. Oh, there were many women, ready to oblige.

AGNES

What do you mean--"oblige"?

ARNOLPHE

Um? We'll leave that till tomorrow.

(ARNOLPHE RISING, CROSSING UP CENTER TO INTERIOR.)

Enough to say: that in affairs of Love, I've been both cautious, and economical. And kept myself for you. And that's another thing, you'll please remember.

AGNES

Oh yes, I will--if you remind me.

ARNOLPHE

Remind you!

AGNES

I'll do my best. But I'm not clever--as you keep on telling me and remembering things is very difficult. I find the things that stay there in my head, are those that come there of their own accord.

ARNOLPHE

What kind of things?

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING LEFT.)

AGNES

Well, there's still my kitten--and the Coxcomb.

ARNOLPHE

You still think of him?

AGNES

I'd like to throw another stone at him.

ARNOLPHE

He's out of sight. Put him right out of mind.

AGNES

(AGNES TURNING TO ARNOLPHE.)

That's another thing: it's just as hard to put things out,
as keep 'em in. Nothing goes in or out--unless I want it to.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT TO STOOL.)

You have much to learn. I wonder if you realize, the
seriousness of marriage?

AGNES

No. I don't think I do.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT TO STOOL, GESTURES TO
AGNES, AND SHE CROSSES TO HIM.)

I'll tell you. A man who marries,

(ARNOLPHE STEPS DOWN STAGE.)

accepts responsibility; shoulders a burden. So does the
woman. It's a partnership.

(ARNOLPHE STEPS DOWN STAGE.)

Two halves--that are not equal. Two duties--not the same. One to command; the other to obey. One leads; the other follows.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS RIGHT TO AGNES.)

That's not confined to marriage. You find it everywhere.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES STAGE RIGHT BEHIND AGNES.)

A soldier of the line, obeys his officer. A servant, his Master, a child, its parent.

(ARNOLPHE STOPS CENTER.)

Even to have harmony in music, there must be one to sing the second part. And to be Soldier, Servant, Child, or Second Fiddle and be it well, to be a Wife, the very source of perfect harmony--by never saying, doing, thinking anything against her husband's wishes--out of tune--

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

that's an achievement. Something to be proud of. And to be proud of one's humility--

(ARNOLPHE TURNS UP STAGE TO AGNES.)

why, that's a virtue every Christian knows. It's simple. Isn't it?

AGNES

(AGNES SITTING IN CHAIR.)

Yes. Very simple.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT TO AGNES.)

Easy to say. Less easy to perform. Too often women fail.

AGNES

Fail?

ARNOLPHE

They disobey which spells Catastrophe. That's not unusual

either. A soldier disobeys--the battle's lost. A city's secret life is like a battle-field--casualties everywhere. Paris is stewn with broken marriages. You understand?

AGNES

I think so.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING LEFT BEHIND AGNES.)

You must do your best. Most woman fail thro' lack of understanding. There are some wicked ones, who, knowing what they do, flout all the decencies. And there are men, young and hot-blooded, who encourage them. Together, they'll descend to anything. Such you'll avoid, as you would the plague.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

You'll be my other half. When you do wrong, I'll be the one to suffer. And I'm sensitive. Easily hurt. And when I'm hurt, I'm angry. And when I'm angry--You'll be the one to suffer. And, behind my anger lies the Wrath of God.

(ARNOLPHE, FACING HER, CROSSES UP STAGE TO AGNES.)

My dear, you're beautiful. And like to hear me say so. Be good, and faithful--and your purity will shine out of your face. Your beauty will endure. But, stain my honour--And your soul turns black.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING RIGHT BEHIND AGNES.)

That, too will be reflected in your face. All those that see you will avert their eyes.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO INTERIOR.)

And more than that--you'll be the Devil's prey. And when you die, go straight to Hell, and boil in oil through all eternity.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO GET BOOK FROM FIREPLACE.)

Did the Nuns teach you to read?

AGNES

From holy books.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT BEHIND CHAIR.)

Try your hand at this--a kind of holy book--

(AGNES RISES, CROSSES RIGHT, TAKES BOOK AND SITS IN CHAIR.)

the author's anonymous.

AGNES

(AGNES DELIVERS TO THE HOUSE.)

What a funny name.

ARNOLPHE

When we're married you must learn the words, and say them to me daily, when you say your prayers. But now, read them out loud.

AGNES

(OPENING THE BOOK AND READING CAREFULLY.)

"The Secrets . . . " I like them.

ARNOLPHE

You must have none from me.

AGNES

None?

ARNOLPHE

Certainly not!

AGNES

Oh!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS DOWN STAGE RIGHT AND FACES FRONT.)

Read on.

AGNES

(READING.)

" . . . of a Happy Marriage, or, Some Rules for Wives. Rule One--She who shares a bed in wedlock must always bear in mind he who lies beside her is her Only man . . . " Well! I should think so. I've never seen a bed that's big enough for three.

ARNOLPHE

Rule Two.

AGNES

(AGNES, RISING, CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT BEHIND STOOL.)

"A wife must dress only for her husband. Her appearance matters nothing--save to him."

(AGNES TURNS TO ARNOLPHE.)

Oh, but you said if I was naughty I'd turn black, and all who saw me would avert their eyes.

ARNOLPHE

So they would;

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING LEFT BEHIND CHAIR TO AGNES.)

but it wouldn't matter, except to me; and you. Rule Three.

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSES DOWN STAGE IN FRONT OF STOOL; THEN CROSSES RIGHT.)

"A wife must never use Paints, Powders or Creams. A Desire to be especially beautiful is seldom, if ever, inspired by a husband." Do women paint their faces?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE FOLLOWING HER.)

You have no need of that.

AGNES

No. But I'd like to try.

ARNOLPHE

Rule Four.

AGNES

(AGNES STEPPING RIGHT.)

"Never accept a present from a man. Nothing is given for nothing."

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

Note that. For you took presents from him.

AGNES

But I gave nothing back.

ARNOLPHE

You let him kiss your neck.

AGNES

That was his nicest present.

ARNOLPHE

Rule Five.

AGNES

"Concerning Men Visitors." Oh! Yes! "A wife shall welcome to her home, only those men,

(AGNES CROSSES RIGHT.)

who come to see her husband. Those, wishing to see her, shall not come in."

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TAKES TWO STEPS RIGHT.)

Well? What's the matter now?

AGNES

Marriage is serious.

ARNOLPHE

Well said. Well said. Rule Six.

AGNES

"A wife shall have no parties, solely of women. For Women, on their own, plot to deceive their husbands."

(AGNES, TURNING, CROSSES LEFT.)

How can they do that?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO AGNES.)

Pray God you never know. Rule Seven. This is for Sunday.

(HORACE ENTERS LEFT AND STANDS OUTSIDE.)

Take special note of this. What follows now, is all important to you.

(HORACE THUNDERS ON THE DOOR.)

AGNES

What's that?

ARNOLPHE

(AGNES, RUNNING AROUND CHAIR, CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT TO WINDOW.)

Who can that be? Look from the window.

AGNES

My Coxcomb!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TWO STEPS.)

Your Coxcomb?

AGNES

(AGNES TURNS LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

My target.

ARNOLPHE

Target!

AGNES

The one I throw the stones at.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES TO WINDOW.)

Away from that door. Up to your room.

(AGNES TURNS, CROSSES AND EXITS HURRIEDLY UP CENTER TO RIGHT. ARNOLPHE CALLING OFF LEFT.)

Alain! Alain!

GEORGETTE

He's gone for the Notary.

ARNOLPHE

He's here.

GEORGETTE

Who's here?

ARNOLPHE

The Enemy.

GEORGETTE

He's not!

ARNOLPHE

He is.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE ENTERING FROM RIGHT.)

What shall I do?

(HORACE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.)

ARNOLPHE

Nothing. I'm going thro' the kitchen into the street, to head him off.

(ARNOLPHE BEGINS TO EXIT RIGHT.)

Don't let him in.

(ARNOLPHE EXITS UP STAGE RIGHT.)

Act II - Scene 2

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CHANGE SCENERY. HORACE KNOCKS ON DOOR. THEN HE STEPS ON BENCH. HORACE IS STANDING ON BENCH LOOKING IN WINDOW WHEN ARNOLPHE ENTERS UP STAGE LEFT. ARNOLPHE TIPTOES UP TO HORACE.)

ARNOLPHE

Horace!

HORACE

(HORACE JUMPING AROUND RIGHT.)

Seigneur Arnolphe!

ARNOLPHE

You here again! Can I believe my eyes? Dear boy, I'm pleased to see you. What are you doing here?

HORACE

(HORACE STEPPING DOWN FROM BENCH.)

But what are you doing here?

ARNOLPHE

Here? Me? Oh, I have a Notary down in the Square.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

I've been to see him; on my way home, passing this street, I recognized your back.

HORACE

My back?

ARNOLPHE

Yes, I was glad to see it. I always shall be.

HORACE

You're quite recovered?

ARNOLPHE

Recovered?

HORACE

Last time I saw you you were very poorly.

ARNOLPHE

Poorly?

HORACE

I left you here, in pain, there, on the seat.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, ah, so you did. I had the cramps.

HORACE

The wind, I think, the wind.

ARNOLPHE

A touch of both.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

But it has passed?

ARNOLPHE

Never in better health.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE TO BENCH.)

Nor spirits, so it seems.

ARNOLPHE

Yes. All goes very well. And with you, too? Tell me about yourself.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP TO HORACE.)

HORACE

I'd rather not.

ARNOLPHE

What's this?

HORACE

(HORACE SITS ON BENCH.)

Last time I saw you I fear I talked too much.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE SITS WITH HORACE.)

Not a bit of it. Last time I saw you, you didn't talk enough. I let you go before you'd told me all there was to tell. Very unfriendly of me.

(ARNOLPHE PAUSES.)

And not the way to treat your father's son. And now you say something's gone wrong.

HORACE

Did I?

ARNOLPHE

Did you what?

HORACE

Say something had gone wrong?

ARNOLPHE

Yes.

HORACE

I never said a word.

ARNOLPHE

But hasn't it?

HORACE

How did you know?

ARNOLPHE

I saw it in your eye.

HORACE

(HORACE JUMPS UP, CROSSING RIGHT.)

My God, what understanding!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

Tell me everything. I may be able to help.

HORACE

I'm very touched.

ARNOLPHE

Don't mention it.

HORACE

(HORACE STEPS DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

You're very right. Things have gone wrong. The fool's come back.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE FOLLOWING HIM DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

What fool?

HORACE

Her guardian.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TAKES TWO STEPS LEFT.)

Oh, him.

HORACE

The Devil take him!

ARNOLPHE

(HORACE DRAWS SWORD AND STEPS LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Careful! Careful!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.)

Don't invoke the devil. When once he gets a finger in the pie, you never know what he'll be up to next.

HORACE

That's very true.

ARNOLPHE

(THEY CROSS LEFT TOGETHER.)

Women are bad enough without the devil.

HORACE

(HORACE SHAKES ARNOLPHE'S HAND.)

That's true again. Oh, you're very wise.

ARNOLPHE

You think so?

HORACE

I do indeed.

ARNOLPHE

Then, tell me of La Souche.

HORACE

Oh, I can scarcely speak of him, and not run mad. Mis-guided, besotted, lecherous, half-mad. An upright corpse! With only one thing in him that's alive. His insane jealousy.

ARNOLPHE

A charming portrait.

HORACE

(HORACE INDICATING HOUSE.)

He's there!

ARNOLPHE

Where?

HORACE

Behind that door.

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE TO DOOR.)

Let's break the damned thing down. And take him by the throat,

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE CENTER.)

and shake him, like a rat.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO HORACE.)

Oh, no. I wouldn't do that if I were you.

HORACE

Why not?

ARNOLPHE

We'll find some other way to deal with him. We'll get the better of him--you and I, together.

HORACE

Oh, Seigneur Arnolphe! To think that two such men, as you and he, should stand on either side of that same door. It's very strange.

ARNOLPHE

It's stranger than you think.

HORACE

The old fool knows.

ARNOLPHE

Knows what?

HORACE

I've been to see her.

ARNOLPHE

Don't tell me that.

HORACE

I do.

ARNOLPHE

How did he find out?

HORACE

I can't imagine.

ARNOLPHE

Did the girl tell him?

HORACE

She's not as naive as that.

ARNOLPHE

He might have wormed it out of her.

HORACE

Most unlikely. Can you imagine yourself--if you were he--worming it out of me?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

You'd keep it to yourself?

HORACE

Of course I should.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT TO COLUMN.)

Like any Frenchman.

(ARNOLPHE SITS.)

How do you know he knows?

HORACE

Oh, there's no doubt.

(HORACE TAKES TWO STEPS LEFT.)

The last few days, how I've been welcomed here. And now! At my last visit,

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE CENTER TO DOOR AND KNOCKS.)

I walked up to the door and knocked upon it--so!

GEORGETTE

Go away, you scoundrel, go away!

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

There! You hear? His voice!

ARNOLPHE

His! Whose?

HORACE

(HORACE DELIVERS FRONT.)

Her guardian's. La Souche.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

It sounded like a woman's.

HORACE

So does his. A silly piping squeak of impotence.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER.)

Look here, young man . . .

HORACE

The door was slammed, right in my face, and insults shouted thro' it.

ARNOLPHE

Insults!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP RIGHT BEHIND HORACE.)

What kind of insults?

HORACE

I can't remember.

ARNOLPHE

Try.

HORACE

It's of no consequence. And as I stood, dumbfounded, utterly, I heard a voice--above me.

ARNOLPHE

Hers?

HORACE

Up on her balcony.

ARNOLPHE

And shouting insults, too?

HORACE

Yes. Yes, she was.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT.)

Poor lad!

HORACE

Worse was to come. What happened then, you'll never guess,

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

not in a hundred years, it's past belief. What do you think?

ARNOLPHE

She threw a stone at you.

HORACE

Good God! You've second sight.

ARNOLPHE

It's what I should expect. Her outraged innocence.

HORACE

There's been no outrage--yet.

ARNOLPHE

This stone she threw at you--was it a big one?

HORACE

Very.

ARNOLPHE

And hit you?

HORACE

Yes.

ARNOLPHE

And hurt?

HORACE

Considerably.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT, AWAY FROM HORACE.)

That's good; that's bad, I mean.

HORACE

The next time I see her, she shall pay for it--with all she has.

ARNOLPHE

Horace! You must be brave. You must prepare yourself.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT TO COLUMN.)

Next time will never come. From what you've told me, you've no chance at all.

HORACE

There is a gleam of hope.

ARNOLPHE

What gleam?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.)

I haven't finished yet.

ARNOLPHE

Not finished?

HORACE

No. There's more to come. Well! Can't you guess?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

God help me! No, I can't!

HORACE

I'm not surprised. What followed then, would baffle even you. You know the stone she threw--it hit me on the shoulder; fell at my feet; I stooped to pick it up; I held it in my hand . . .

ARNOLPHE

I know, I know!

HORACE

You know?

ARNOLPHE

Well--you're telling me.

HORACE

I held it in my hand--Then! Can you imagine?

ARNOLPHE

No, I can't. Go on.

HORACE

On the bottom side, where it was flat, tied neatly on with string--a letter!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT, SITS ON COLUMN.)

Ah!

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Dear sir, what is it?

ARNOLPHE

I've got the cramps again.

HORACE

How very strange. There must be something, here, about the place, that doesn't suit you. Have you the wind as well?

ARNOLPHE

I may have any moment. What of the letter?

HORACE

(HORACE TAKING A LETTER FROM HIS POCKET.)

I have it here.

ARNOLPHE

Then read it. Read it to me.

HORACE

Completely ignorant,

(HORACE WITH LEFT FOOT ON COLUMN.)

She may have been--indeed, I think she was--

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TWO STEPS.)

but, oh, how swiftly Love can teach. And, in a moment, how we can be changed. In one revealing flash,

(HORACE STEPS BACK RIGHT.)

abysmal ignorance knows all there is to know.

ARNOLPHE

Read me the letter.

HORACE

Yes, indeed I will.

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

A childish scrawling hand--and she writes this:

(HE MAKES AS IF TO READ, BUT GOES ON TALKING.)

Oh, but the Little God works miracles.

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN TO FRONT STAGE.)

Under his touch the miser spends his money; a coward may be brave; a man without manners becomes courteous;

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

a mental clodhopper becomes a wit. The Blind can see. The
Lame can walk. The Foolish understand.

ARNOLPHE

Yes, yes, yes--the letter!

HORACE

Yes. The letter. She writes:

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE LEFT.)

Oh, I can see her now . . .

ARNOLPHE

Where?

HORACE

As she was then--up on her balcony. Her arm raised high; her little hand clutching the great big stone, and she leaned over to me--and she shouted--

(HORACE LOOKING UNDER RIGHT ARM.)

"I've thought of all you had to say," she screamed, "considered every word--and here's my answer." And she flung it at me. Doesn't that show resource? A very pretty cunning. Aren't I a lucky fellow? Don't you admire her for it,

(HORACE CROSSING RIGHT TOWARD ARNOLPHE.)

and doesn't it make that guardian of hers look ludicrous?

ARNOLPHE

Nothing to what he feels.

HORACE

He shuts the girl up like a prisoner. And tells his servants not to let me in. It's true his coming back has complicated things, for the time being. I wouldn't have it otherwise. It's brought the girl to life. And there he is! Behind this very door--as close to me, as I am, now, to you. D'you think he's listening?

ARNOLPHE

I shouldn't be surprised.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

It's funny, isn't it?

ARNOLPHE

Yes. Very, very funny.

HORACE

The wind?

ARNOLPHE

The letter!

HORACE

Yes. The letter.

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE A FEW STEPS.)

It's very touching, and ingenuous. It's brave; and it's bewildered. A little cry of pleasure, and of pain--Cupid's first dart draws blood.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE JUMPS UP AND RUSHES LEFT TO HORACE.)

Give it to me.

HORACE

I'll read it. She begins:

(ARNOLPHE LOOKING OVER HORACE'S SHOULDER.)

"My own dear Coxcomb . . . " Now, that's beyond me. Why should she call me that?

ARNOLPHE

I can't imagine.

HORACE

She goes on: "I want to write to you and tell you all my thoughts; but I don't know how to say them. I mistrust even my own words." It's pathetic. Listen to this: "I know now that I have been brought up

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT AND SITS ON COLUMN.)

to know nothing." And she goes on: "I am afraid I might write something I should not." Then she writes: "I am sad, and very angry, at the things I am made to do against you. And my heart aches that I do not see you any more. Oh, how I wish that I was yours." That's what she says. She wishes she was mine. "I hope it is not wicked to say that. Everybody, I mean my Guardian and the Nuns, tell me young men are deceivers; and you

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE CENTER.)

should never listen to them; and all they want to do is to betray you.

(HORACE STOPS UP.)

I don't know what that means. And anyhow I don't believe it." Bless her! She doesn't believe it. I love this bit: "Your words went thro' and thro' me,

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

and I hear them still. So how can they be false? Please tell me if they are. Never could I wish any harm to you. I think it would be very wrong of you to wish me harm." Was anything so simply logical? And she ends up:

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO FRONT STAGE.)

"Come again soon. I'll throw another stone at you; your loving, loving Agnes." This in my hand, am I to give up hope? Not on your life! But I ask your help.

ARNOLPHE

Eh?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Sir, will you condescend to play a part in this?

ARNOLPHE

I mean to whether I'm asked or not. First tell me this: What d'you mean to do?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT AND SITS WITH ARNOLPHE.)

Well! As you say--Let's put our heads together. I half expected she'd come out on her balcony, and throw another stone. Why do you think she doesn't?

ARNOLPHE

Perhaps because of me.

HORACE

What difference should you make?

ARNOLPHE

Young women don't as a rule, stand on their balconies, and throw stones at men.

HORACE

That's very true.

(HORACE RISES, CROSSING LEFT.)

I'll throw a stone at her.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISES.)

What for?

HORACE

Answer her letter. Tell her I love her.

ARNOLPHE

No. I shouldn't do that.

HORACE

Why not?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO HORACE.)

La Souche might hear. Remember he's very close.

HORACE

That's true again.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND HORACE.)

One thing is certain. Whatever course we take, La Souche must never know.

HORACE

How right you are.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER.)

This wants thinking over. Suppose we sleep on it.

HORACE

Sleep on it!

ARNOLPHE

Tomorrow morning I shall see more clearly. I shall have made a plan. Be patient till tomorrow.

HORACE

Tomorrow! That seems years away.

ARNOLPHE

But a few hours.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO HORACE.)

Far better wait, than make some silly move, that might prove fatal.

HORACE

I suppose that's true.

ARNOLPHE

(ENTIRE TIME ARNOLPHE IS MOVING HORACE OFF LEFT.)

Of course it is. If you want my help, wait till the morning.

HORACE

I'm in your hands.

ARNOLPHE

Yes, dear boy, you are.

HORACE

Where shall we meet?

ARNOLPHE

Come to my house.

HORACE

Your house?

ARNOLPHE

If I'm not there--I'll leave a message for you. Don't stay here now. Most ill-advised. He may be watching.

HORACE

You think so?

ARNOLPHE

I have a feeling that he's got his eye on you.

HORACE

Tomorrow at your house. How can I ever thank you?

ARNOLPHE

Don't try! I'll give you something to be thankful for.

HORACE

I take my leave.

(HORACE EXITS LEFT.)

ARNOLPHE

Oh, anguish, anguish, anguish! Oh, that letter! It'll be the death of me. Oh, the little vixen! I can see her now--sitting there, listening to me--her childlike, smiling eyes. And all the time--the knowledge of what she'd done to me

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT.)

was at the back of them. Oh, Women! Young or old; clever or silly; at heart, they're all the same. They're never innocent.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

Either wanting intrigues; or having intrigues--or getting out of 'em. Unfathomable depths of Infamy! And this one's worse than most. She makes a mock of all I've done for her--I'll leave her to her fate.

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON COLUMN, DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

He'll take her; have her; and have done with her. And I shall be revenged, she'll bring it on herself. What can I ask for more? That way I'd lose her. And I can't do that. I can't. I can't. I can't. I chose her for myself. So carefully. So many years ago. She'd no relations; not a single friend, she'd nothing. So she'd be wholly mine. I petted and played with her watched her grow up--A child--

a girl--a woman.

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

How I've looked forward--Like any lovely fruit, I've watched her ripen; and now another plucks her from my tree.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TWO STEPS.)

The more I think of it, the more I burn with rage. Rage, I could bear--it passes.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES CENTER.)

But the more I'm consumed with Anger, the more I'm consumed with Love. Somehow, she's never seemed more beautiful. I'm going mad!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE CENTER.)

She's up there now. Beyond her balcony.

(ARNOLPHE MOVES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

I could call out to her. What could I call? I'm mad already. Stark, staring mad. A fool, a shameless fool. I could beat out my brains.

(ARNOLPHE FEELS HIS HEAD.)

My horns! My cuckold's horns. No. they're not there. Not yet. I'm sure they're not. Oh, Merciful Heaven! Grant they never will be. Or, if they are, give me the strength to bear them,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

like my fellow men. No. I'll not ask for that. For that's surrender--and I'll not give in.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT.)

What am I thinking of? I hold all the Cards. The girl belongs to me--I'm her appointed Guardian--and, obviously a better match for her, than this young Ne'er-do-well. For her own sake, she has to marry me.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

I have to keep my head. Instruct my servants further, double-bolt my doors--

(ARNOLPHE LOOKS OFF UP STAGE LEFT.)

and that I'll do. Young man, I'm sorry for you. Tomorrow morning it'll be too late.

(ARNOLPHE EXITS INTO THE HOUSE. THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

Act III - Scene 1

(GEORGETTE AND ALAIN CHANGE THE SCENERY. SCENE--
INSIDE THE HOUSE. GEORGETTE SITS ON STOOL, LEFT, AND
ALAIN STANDS BESIDE HER LEFT.)

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE ENTERS UP STAGE CENTER INTERIOR.)

Let me see. Where was I?

(ARNOLPHE LOOKS AT THEM AND THEY LOOK AT HIM.)

Oh, yes.

(THEY LOOK AWAY.)

Oh, no. First, tell me this: since her kitten died,
there's been no cat or dog about the house?

ALAIN

No.

GEORGETTE

No, there hasn't.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO CHAIR. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE
GLANCE AT EACH OTHER AND THEN STARE AT ARNOLPHE.)

Very strange. Just now, up in her room, while I was talking
to her,

(ARNOLPHE LEANS ON BACK OF CHAIR.)

I heard a noise. It might have been a dog under the bed.
I looked, but there was nothing there. I don't know what
it was. Oh well, no matter.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Where did I say I was?

(ARNOLPHE LOOKS AT THEM.)

Oh, yes:

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO THEM.)

get this into your skulls, thick as they are. A threat to my honour, is a threat to you. If he outwits you; and gets in--I've done with you.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Into the street, the pair of you--and starve. I'll see to that.

ALAIN

Master, you can trust us.

GEORGETTE

We've told you so.

ALAIN

We keeps on tellin' yer.

ARNOLPHE

You'd be a laughing-stock. There's not a servant up and down the street, or round the Square, who wouldn't cock a snook at you--

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE.)

the pair of Nincompoops who couldn't guard a home.

ALAIN

(ALAIN TO GEORGETTE.)

Did you hear that?

GEORGETTE

He called us Nincompoops.

ALAIN

I tell you, Master, If he came here now . . .

ARNOLPHE

Well! What if he did,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT TO CHAIR.)

And made a pretty speech.

ALAIN

A pretty speech--to me. Just waste of breath.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT CENTER TO ALAIN.)

Well, let's try. Suppose he came to you and said--"I'm in great trouble. I beseech your help. As you hope for mercy at the last, grant me one tiny boon."

(ARNOLPHE BOWS.)

ALAIN

(DELIVERS TO ARNOLPHE. LOOKS OVER HIS SHOULDER AND WINKS AT GEORGETTE.)

Ney, you're an idiot.

ARNOLPHE

What's that?

ALAIN

That's what I'd say to him.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO GEORGETTE.)

Oh, yes--good, good, good! Now, he might say to you: "Georgette, my dear one. Oh, my Beautiful. You always were a favourite of mine. So good. So sympathetic."

(ARNOLPHE KISSING GEORGETTE'S HAND.)

"Such a heart of gold."

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE THROWING AWAY ARNOLPHE'S HAND.)

Oh, shut your mouth!

ARNOLPHE

What did you say?

GEORGETTE

You're him.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, yes. So I am.

(ARNOLPHE GOES DOWN ON ONE KNEE.)

But then he'd try again, even more pitiful. "Oh, if you don't have mercy on me, I shall die."

GEORGETTE

Good riddance!

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES LEFT TO GEORGETTE.)

I know of two, at least, be glad to see you go.

ARNOLPHE

Um? Yes! That sounds convincing. But he'd not stop at that.

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

He'd try another tack. "I know the world," he'd say--"I'm not a man who wants something for nothing. No-one will suffer for what I want to do. Why shouldn't you benefit? Here's money for you. Gold!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE CENTER.)

Here take it. Take it."

(ARNOLPHE FIRST HANDS A COIN TO GEORGETTE, THEN TO ALAIN.
GEORGETTE BITES HERS, THEN DROPS IT INTO HER BLOUSE. ALAIN
POCKETS HIS. THEY NOD AT EACH OTHER.)

ALAIN

Now, get out of it!

(ALAIN PUSHES ARNOLPHE LEFT.)

ARNOLPHE

(GEORGETTE PUSHES ARNOLPHE RIGHT.)

Hey!

GEORGETTE

Be off!

ALAIN

(ALAIN SWINGS ARNOLPHE AROUND LEFT.)

Away with you!

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE BOOTS ARNOLPHE IN ASS.)

Make yourself scarce.

ARNOLPHE

(ALAIN TRIPS ARNOLPHE AND HE LANDS IN CHAIR STAGE RIGHT.)

Hey! That's enough.

ALAIN

That sort o' thing?

GEORGETTE

Something like that?

ARNOLPHE

Not bad. Not bad--except the money.

ALAIN

(ALAIN STEPPING RIGHT.)

Money?

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT PAST ALAIN.)

What money?

ARNOLPHE

I gave you some.

ALAIN

Did you?

ARNOLPHE

You put it in your pocket.

ALAIN

Did I?

ARNOLPHE

You shouldn't have taken it!

ALAIN

Shouldn't have taken it!

GEORGETTE

Would you believe it!

ALAIN

Let's do it all again.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE STEPS RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Pushing and all.

ARNOLPHE

No need, no need.

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Try the bit again--offering money.

GEORGETTE

We might forget--and take it, by mistake.

ALAIN

Force o' habit.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE, RISING, CROSSES LEFT TO ALAIN.)

Keep what I've given you. Less reason to take his. Well, he's a cleverer fellow than I think if he gets in now. In any case, we've seen the last of him, at least until tomorrow.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE UP STAGE RIGHT AT WINDOW.)

Master!

ARNOLPHE

What is it?

GEORGETTE

(ARNOLPHE AND ALAIN CROSS UP STAGE RIGHT TO WINDOW.)

Look.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, God-in-Heaven, there he is again.

ALAIN

And coming here.

GEORGETTE

No. No, he's not.

ALAIN

What's he up to?

GEORGETTE

What's he doing at the balcony?

ALAIN

He's going to climb it.

GEORGETTE

He is. He is.

ALAIN

He is. He isn't.

GEORGETTE

What's he think he's doin'?

ALAIN

Measuring.

GEORGETTE

That's what he's doing--taking measurements.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT PAST STOOL.)

This is insufferable! Go out and stop him.

(ALAIN BEGINS EXITING UP STAGE RIGHT.)

Ask him what he wants. No, don't--he wouldn't tell you:

(ALAIN CROSSES RIGHT TO WINDOW.)

and I've got to know. I'll go myself--out thro' the back;
and take him from behind. Thank God he knows my Notary's
in the Square. He always thinks that's where I'm coming from.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES CENTER TO GEORGETTE.)

Is he still there?

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

He's pickin' up a stone.

ARNOLPHE

Aah!

(ARNOLPHE EXITS UP STAGE RIGHT. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CHANGE THE SCENERY.)

Act III - Scene 2

(SCENE--OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. HORACE ENTERS UP STAGE RIGHT. ARNOLPHE ENTERS UP STAGE LEFT.)

ARNOLPHE

(THEY RUN INTO EACH OTHER AND BOW.)

Horace! You here again!

HORACE

You, too, Seigneur Arnolphe! What are you doing here?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS LEFT.)

Some very awkward business--with my Notary--keeps me on tenterhooks; running to and fro.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Oh, such Adventures since I saw you last. I've been up in her room.

ARNOLPHE

Aah!

HORACE

Don't say you're ill again?

ARNOLPHE

No--only excited by what you're telling me.

HORACE

I'll tell you everything.

ARNOLPHE

For God's sake, do.

HORACE

Well, when I left you, I couldn't rest.

(HORACE AND ARNOLPHE CROSS DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

To sleep upon it seemed impossible. In fact, my legs refused to bear me back to my lodgings. Instead, they brought me here. To have another look--just one more look--

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT TO WINDOW.)

at that dear window, behind which she lives. And there she was. Out on her balcony--And overjoyed to see me. I knew you'd laugh! She managed to come down.

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

ARNOLPHE

Come down!

HORACE

Down the back stair-way; into the garden; opened the gate for me--she had the key. Oh, she's a cunning one.

ARNOLPHE

She is, she is.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Together we crept up again--into her room. No sooner were

we there, than we heard footsteps. Her Guardian. On the stairs. I was prepared to kill him.

ARNOLPHE

Eh?

HORACE

It wouldn't have been wise. No point in doing that.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO FRONT OF COLUMN.)

No point at all--oh no!--a great mistake.

HORACE

But Agnes acting in a flash,

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER.)

bundled me into her wardrobe. He stayed there half an hour talking such utter drivel--what I could hear of it. There I was--shut up--it was as dark as night, and hot as hell, I couldn't see a thing, and then--I got the cramps. I bumped my head; knocked down a dress; and got myself entangled in a shift. The row I made. I can't imagine how he didn't hear--

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

God, he must be decrepit. Deaf as a post.

ARNOLPHE

Eh?

HORACE

I said, deaf as a post.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, yes.

HORACE

And tonight . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO HORACE.)

Tonight?

HORACE

I visit her again. She begged me to. Never have I known, such simple, natural, unconventional, uninhibited yet strangely innocent expression of all she feels and wants.

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE CENTER.)

Oh, I'm her slave. Obeying her every whim. I don't know how to wait till darkness falls--

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE WITH HORACE.)

Then, I shall bring a ladder . . .

ARNOLPHE

A ladder!

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSING RIGHT.)

I've taken the measurements. Under his very nose.

(CROSSING FURTHER RIGHT.)

And there he sits, snug in his little fortress, thinking himself secure. But tonight . . .

ARNOLPHE

Yes?

HORACE

Yes!

(CHRYSALDE ENTERS UP STAGE LEFT.)

CHRYSALDE

Oh, my dear friend. I'm pleased to find you. I feared I might be late.

ARNOLPHE

Late? Late for what?

CHRYSLALDE

Dinner.

ARNOLPHE

Dinner--who wants dinner?

CHRYSLALDE

I do. You invited me.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO HORACE.)

Oh! Er--this is Horace.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Son of my oldest friend.

HORACE

(HORACE COUNTERS LEFT TO CENTER.)

And a good friend to me--dear Seigneur Arnolphe.

CHRYSLALDE

You mustn't call him that.

HORACE

Not call him by his name?

CHRYSLALDE

It's not his name. He changed it.

(HORACE TURNS TO LOOK AT ARNOLPHE.)

ARNOLPHE

Oh, no. Indeed I haven't.

CHRYSLALDE

You told me so yourself. "Here I'm not known as Arnolphe"--that's what you said--"My name is now . . . " Ah, it's on my tongue. " . . . is now . . . " No, I've forgotten it.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS AWAY RIGHT.)

Thank God for that.

CHRYSLALDE

Don't tell me. I'll have it in a moment. It was a silly name. La . . . La . . .

ARNOLPHE

Oh, la, la! (UNDER HIS BREATH; HISSING.) Hold your tongue!

CHRYSLALDE

I beg your pardon!

HORACE

(HORACE BOWING TO ARNOLPHE.)

I must be off. Sir, I take my leave. Wish me luck tonight.

(HORACE EXITS UP STAGE LEFT.)

CHRYSLALDE

La Souche! La Souche!

ARNOLPHE

Ugh!

(HORACE ENTERS FROM UP STAGE LEFT, WHIPPING OUT HIS SWORD.
HE STOPS LEFT CENTER STAGE.)

HORACE

Who called La Souche?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE--FRONT.)

Nobody called. I sneezed--La Soooooch!--I think my cold is worse.

HORACE

Oh, I'm sorry. We must take care of him. I'm anxious for him--he has so many ailments. Well, good-bye, again.

(HORACE EXITS UP LEFT.)

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES RIGHT. ARNOLPHE COUNTERS LEFT.)

Why this mystery?

ARNOLPHE

There is no mystery.

CHRYSLALDE

I should have thought there was. But let it go. What about dinner?

ARNOLPHE

I'm not hungry.

CHRYSLALDE

But I am! Do we have dinner here? I gather your intended doesn't dine out.

ARNOLPHE

She won't get any dinner.

CHRYSLALDE

Not hungry either?

ARNOLPHE

Whether she is or not, she'll go without.

CHRYSLALDE

You sound a happy household. Anything wrong?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

Everything.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO ARNOLPHE.)

Oh, my poor friend--tell me the trouble.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP LEFT.)

Oh, I'm the sport of Fate. That's what I am--a plaything of the Gods. And after all the trouble that I have taken to arrange the future, exactly as I want--It isn't fair.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN LEFT.)

I don't ask for any special favour from above. A little recognition, some slight reward, for all I've done--

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON COLUMN.)

and all I haven't done--But, no! The Gods are jealous, that's what it is. They'll have no planning in the Universe except their own.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Yes; but--apart from the Universe--what's wrong?

ARNOLPHE

I'll tell you. Listen--that young jackanapes . . .

CHRYSLALDE

Horace? The charming Horace?

ARNOLPHE

The devil take his charm. While I was away, broke into my house.

CHRYSALDE

And met the girl?

(CHRYSALDE SITS ON COLUMN.)

And she thinks well of him?

ARNOLPHE

A thousand times too well.

CHRYSALDE

Well--what d'you expect? The first young gentleman she's ever seen. And most presentable. Were he a Monster, she'd have been intrigued.

ARNOLPHE

And he is a Monster--of Deceit. And so is she. The way they plot and plan.

CHRYSALDE

You've spent your life in making plans

(CHRYSALDE RISING.)

to outwit your fellows. It has one disadvantage--others do the same.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

But she's my wife.

CHRYSALDE

(CHRYSALDE CROSSES RIGHT.)

Is she?

ARNOLPHE

Well, very nearly is.

CHRYSALDE

And you're jealous.

ARNOLPHE

Wouldn't you be?

CHRYSALDE

Yes. I expect I should. But, knowing myself, as well as knowing you, I doubt if I should feel the same despair--

(CHRYSALDE CROSSES RIGHT.)

nor even, for that matter, lose my appetite.

ARNOLPHE

I hate your flippancy.

CHRYSALDE

An attempt to laugh you out of your misery.

(CHRYSALDE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

But, in all seriousness, it's not the Gods or Fate, or some External Thing that tortures you. It's something in yourself-- It's this barbaric passion of possessiveness. You can't keep even your dearest things completely to yourself.

ARNOLPHE

There is a limit.

CHRYSALDE

Of course there is. It's where you set your limits. Yours are quite impossibly confined. They should be stretched with generosity. A civilized desire that the one you love should have the most from life.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER.)

Revoltng nonsense. An intellectual excuse for immorality.

CHRYSALDE

(CHRYSALDE CROSSING TO ARNOLPHE.)

Let me tell you, sir. I think your attitude just as nonsensical and as revolting--as you think mine. And to what

depths of folly does this dread of cuckoldry reduce you. A man may be a thief; a bully; or a cheat; if his wife's faithful to him, he's a decent chap. Why judge a man by how his wife behaves? Take my advice . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS DOWN CENTER, THEN RIGHT.)

Advice from you! Rank poison!

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO ARNOLPHE.)

Take it as medicine then. A little at a time. Nasty--but to be swallowed. Here's a dose: Look to your own behaviour. Not too much to hers; or you may drive her to the thing you fear.

ARNOLPHE

I never heard such idiocy. I'll tell you this: unless I keep an eye on her; both eyes--wide open--the worst will happen--I shall be betrayed.

CHRYSLALDE

What then?

ARNOLPHE

Eh? What was that? What did I hear?

CHRYSLALDE

It's an accident can happen to us all. To bear it bravely, and with self-respect . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO CHRYSLALDE.)

Self-respect: you sicken me. To compromise with Evil: and call it self-respect.

CHRYSLALDE

The thing's as Evil as you think it is. No more, no less. Regard it as overwhelming--you'll be overwhelmed. Believe it bearable--you'll find you'll bear it.

ARNOLPHE

And go about the place, boasting my wife has lovers--and I like it.

CHRYSLALDE

If you boast about it, everybody knows. But so they do if you run mad, and call destruction down on all concerned, yourself included. You're just as ridiculous raging as boasting. There's a middle way.

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES RIGHT INTO ARNOLPHE.)

Keep quiet about it. Steel yourself to silence. Avert your eyes. And it can happen--when you turn to look, there's nothing there.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING RIGHT.)

That's very possible.

(ARNOLPHE LOOKING BACK AT CHRYSLALDE.)

No lover and no wife--they've gone away together.

(ARNOLPHE TAKES TWO STEPS UP RIGHT.)

Any more physic? I'll pour it in the street.

CHRYSLALDE

I'll give you one more dose.

(CHRYSLALDE UP RIGHT.)

I'd rather be married to a wife,

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES RIGHT BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

who might, on occasion, have a faithless lapse, than to a nagging one. Or to a wife, always making demands, who eats a man alive, complaining all the time she doesn't like the taste.

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

Or to the worst of all--Some Paragon of Virtue, who believes her Faithfulness to be her only obligation in the married

state. And has only interest in her husband--that he should have no interest in another woman. Then, she springs to life, and pours abuse on him.

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES UP LEFT ONE STEP.)

Here's a last pill! If a woman isn't always all that she should be it gives the man a certain latitude. So swallow that.

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSING UP LEFT.)

Talking of swallowing it--I'm hungry.

(CHRYSLALDE EXITS UP LEFT.)

I must go and eat.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE, TURNING, CROSSES UP LEFT AFTER CHRYSLALDE.)

Here! Hi! Come back! Of all the idiots.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS LEFT, THEN CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE ENTER UP RIGHT.)

Alain! Oh, he makes me furious. Oh, there you are. Oh, I'm so angry.

ALAIN

With us?

GEORGETTE

What's the matter now?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT.)

An interfering fool, who says a lot of things I don't know how to answer--till he's gone. Oh, what's the matter? I can deal with him another time. Now to deal with Horace! And I will.

(ARNOLPHE--GESTURING. GEORGETTE AND ALAIN CROSS CENTER TO ARNOLPHE.)

Listen: I found out what he was up to; you were right--measuring. He's going to bring a ladder.

GEORGETTE

A ladder! Whatever for?

ARNOLPHE

What d'you think?

GEORGETTE

To climb.

ARNOLPHE

My God, you're bright!

ALAIN

You mean he's going to climb a ladder on to the balcony?
Into her room?

ARNOLPHE

I don't suppose he'd stop out on the balcony.

GEORGETTE

Oh, the wickedness!

ALAIN

What are you going to do?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

I'm going to let him.

GEORGETTE AND ALAIN

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CROSS DOWN STAGE LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Let him? You're going to let him?

ARNOLPHE

Hold your tongues. He's coming here tonight. Inside the house, we three will be on guard--watching. As soon as he appears, the two of you--armed with sticks--out thro' the kitchen; into the street' behind him.

(ARNOLPHE STEPS LEFT.)

It'll be dark. He'll place his ladder. As soon as he sets one foot upon the bottom rung you attack. And beat him.

(ARNOLPHE BACKS THEM UP.)

Beat him black and blue. Belabour him. Don't spare that back of his. We'll teach him such a lesson.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN LEFT.)

Black-and-blue, and bleeding, he can creep home, and that's the last we'll have of him--hanging about the place.

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CROSS UP STAGE TO HOUSE.)

Into the house. We have to find the sticks. They must be very thick and strong, and very knobbly. I could be glad of this. I feel myself, tonight, the Champion of my Sex. If every lover were received like this that wretched animal--a man with horns--would soon become extinct.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP STAGE TO THEM.)

In with you. In.

(THEY EXIT INTO THE HOUSE.)

It's getting dark.

(ARNOLPHE EXITS INTO HOUSE.)

We shan't have long to wait.

(GEORGETTE AND ALAIN CHANGE SCENERY.)

Act III - Scene 3

(SCENE--INSIDE THE HOUSE. GEORGETTE AND ALAIN ARE AT THE WINDOW WITH CUDGELS.)

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE ENTERS UP RIGHT.)

He should be coming any moment now. It's very dark. We shall see him when he comes round the corner under the lamp-light there, across the road. What was that? Something moved.

(ARNOLPHE TO ALAIN.)

Isn't that a shadow? On the wall? It moved again. It's him. He's coming. Here he is. And with his ladder.

(THEY RAISE CUDGELS.)

Have you got your sticks? He's stopping--and looks round; Now looks to her balcony. Oh, you villain. He thinks he's unobserved. Here he comes, nearer.

(ARNOLPHE PUSHES THEM FROM WINDOW.)

Careful! Keep from the window. Don't let him see you.

(ALAIN BEGINS CROSSING UP RIGHT.)

Are you ready?

(ARNOLPHE STOPS HIM.)

Don't go yet. Wait till I give the word--get ready--

(ARNOLPHE LOOKS OUT WINDOW.)

ready--Now!

(THEY BEGIN EXIT UP RIGHT.)

Out! Thro' the kitchen.

(ARNOLPHE STOPS THEM.)

Stop! As he mounts the ladder--strike! And strike hard. There's nothing sham about this fight

(THEY EXIT UP RIGHT.)

so strike to hurt.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO CHAIR.)

Oh, this is wonderful! I wouldn't miss this moment for the world.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP RIGHT TO WINDOW.)

What's he doing now? How stealthily he moves. Again, he stops--again, looks up, now sets the ladder. Where are those servants? In a moment, he'll be up it. Ah! There they are. I can see 'em, in the lamplight. They mustn't stop there, or he'll see them, too. I can see 'em moving. They must be

near him. Yes, they're close behind him. Almost touching.
Now he starts to climb.

(ARNOLPHE TWIRLS AROUND.)

Now! Now!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO CHAIR.)

He's getting what he asked for.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP RIGHT TO WINDOW.)

My God, Alain can hit. And Georgette, too.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO CHAIR.)

I've never seen a carpet beaten with half such energy.

(ARNOLPHE AT WINDOW.)

What's happened? What could have happened? I can't see
anyone--and not a sound.

(ARNOLPHE UP RIGHT TO INTERIOR.)

He must have got away; and they'll be coming back.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR.)

Why don't they come? They may have overdone it. That last
blow of Alain's would have felled an ox. I can't stand much
of this.

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE ENTER UP RIGHT AND LEFT AND STAND.)

Well?

ALAIN

Master! He's dead!

ARNOLPHE

Merciful Heaven!

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT TO ALAIN.)

Madman! You Madman!

ALAIN

Don't shout at me. Nor blame us either. We did what we was told.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE CENTER AND SITS ON STOOL.)

What happened?

ALAIN

(ALAIN, STAGE RIGHT CENTER, GEORGETTE LEFT BESIDE HIM.)

As he began to climb, I aimed a blow. But as I aimed, he stooped. It must have hit his head. He gave a cry; one cry; let go his hold--and fell.

(ALAIN INDICATES GROUND. ALL THREE LOOK DOWN.)

Fell at my feet; and didn't move--'e never moved. I turned him over, like a sack of coals. There never was a doornail, half as dead--

(ALAIN SHAKES HEAD. THEY ALL SHAKE HEADS.)

'e never moved.

ARNOLPHE

He never moved. He lies there now.

ALAIN

Oh, no, 'e don't.

ARNOLPHE

Well, where's he gone to?

ALAIN

Into the garden.

ARNOLPHE

Into the garden?

ALAIN

Yes. I dragged him there. Round to the back. No point in leaving him, for every stranger, passing by, to see. Master--this is murder!

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm frightened. I'm afraid. What are we going to do? What'll they do to us? We'll be arrested; put in prison; executed.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, for God's sake, woman, stop it,

(GEORGETTE SHUTS UP.)

stop that noise. You'll be all right. No harm'll come to you. Or him; or me.

ALAIN

No harm! How d'you make that out?

ARNOLPHE

The blow was struck in self-defence.

ALAIN

(ALAIN CROSSES RIGHT, THEN TURNS BACK LEFT.)

Well! Of all the . . . Self-defence!

ARNOLPHE

Defending my honour and the girl's. And he was breaking in.

ALAIN

Yes; that's true enough.

ARNOLPHE

The Law has little sympathy for thieves; and young seducers.

GEORGETTE

Oh--are you sure of that?

ARNOLPHE

Well, if it has--there's certainly a way of getting round it.
Let me think. First, leave the ladder there--for evidence.
Next--the body . . .

ALAIN

In the potting shed. He'll stay there till you want him.

ARNOLPHE

I'll to the Notary.

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

He'll tell us what to do.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP RIGHT.)

If he's in bed, I'll rouse him. It may be that La Souche must disappear; And the four of us leave Paris for a while; and live in my country house. There I am "Arnolphe". And "La Souche" is nobody. He doesn't exist. How can a man without existence commit a crime?

(ARNOLPHE STARTS UP CENTER.)

Pack all your things to travel, and wait here.

(ARNOLPHE STOPS. HE TURNS BACK TO ALAIN AND GEORGETTE.)

Did you see Agnes?

GEORGETTE

No.

ALAIN

Not a sign of her.

ARNOLPHE

At least that's something to be thankful for. Pack her things, too.

(ARNOLPHE EXITS UP CENTER. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE CHANGE SCENERY.)

Act III - Scene 4

(SCENE--OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. ARNOLPHE SNEAKS ON STAGE RIGHT WITH LANTERN.)

HORACE

Seigneur Arnolphe!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON BENCH.)

Who's that? Who called?

HORACE

Seigneur Arnolphe!

ARNOLPHE

Who is it?

HORACE

(HORACE ENTERS UP STAGE LEFT.)

Me! You didn't expect to see me here again. And I must say I'm not surprised. Oh, Seigneur Arnolphe--since I saw you last, I've had such strokes of luck.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

Of what?

HORACE

Of luck. Of great good fortune.

ARNOLPHE

I think I'm going mad.

HORACE

Off to your Notary again?

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE SITS ON BENCH.)

Same old business. At it day and night.

HORACE

But that's where I was going.

ARNOLPHE

You! To my Notary.

HORACE

Yes.

ARNOLPHE

Whatever for? Has something happened to you?

HORACE

It has! Indeed it has.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

I should keep quiet about it, if I were you.

HORACE

(HORACE STEPS DOWN STAGE CENTER.)

Keep quiet? No. Never. He'll see the inside of a prison, or something worse.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING STAGE LEFT.)

You mean La Souche?

HORACE

La Souche is done for; finished; we've heard the last of him.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE SITTING ON BENCH.)

I think you may be right.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSING UP STAGE.)

We can forget him. He no longer counts. Things have gone further.

ARNOLPHE

Further?

HORACE

Adventure upon Adventure.

(HORACE PUTS RIGHT FOOT ON BENCH.)

Listen to this: I came here with a ladder--as I said--no sooner had I set one foot upon a rung, than I was set upon.

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

It must have been La Souche.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, no!

HORACE

How did he know?

ARNOLPHE

Know what?

HORACE

That I was coming.

ARNOLPHE

Don't ask me.

(ARNOLPHE RISING.)

And you were set upon! I can't believe it.

HORACE

They might have killed me, very nearly did. A blow right on the head. It knocked me out. And the next thing I knew,

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

I slowly realized I was on the ground,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT.)

and someone bending over me.

(THEY MEET.)

La Souche! Or one of his household, there were two of them. I'd been unconscious, and my eyes were closed, and so I kept 'em closed--I heard him telling someone I was dead. Lord, he was frightened. Then, if you please, he took me by the feet, and dragged me, for what seemed a hundred miles, over some cobble stones, and thro' a cabbage patch, and dumped me in a shed. And shut the door. I still felt pretty dizzy. And not knowing where they were, I thought I'd better stop there for a while. Then, in the dark, I heard a quiet fumbling at the door, and it was opened. Someone came in. And knelt beside me, and began to cry. Tears fell on my face; well, by that time, I thought that I'd been dead for long enough--and opened my eyes. A face--so close to mine--in the half-darkness--looking down at me. It was hers.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE STEPS DOWN STAGE.)

Hers? You mean Agnes?

HORACE

She'd watched the whole thing from her balcony. And when they'd gone, came down. Now d'you realize my luck?

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT BEHIND ARNOLPHE; STOPS LEFT BESIDE HIM.)

She's come to me. She's mine. She's with me now.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO COLUMN.)

Aah!

HORACE

(HORACE FOLLOWING.)

Dear Seigneur Arnolphe, ought you to be out?

ARNOLPHE

Out?

HORACE

This chill night air is shocking for a cold.

ARNOLPHE

She's with you now? What have you done with her?

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP LEFT.)

Where is she?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

Under that archway. Waiting for me. You can see her from here. I was taking her with me to your Notary. I thought perhaps he'd know your whereabouts. I had to find you--even at this hour--there's no-one else.

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

Sir, I have to ask you one last favour. You see: as it turned out, this is no episode. Her tears upon my face. The things she said to me. First, her distress; and then, her happiness.

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

I know she loves me. Even more deeply I know that I love her. Those few moments in a potting shed--But she is all my world, and I am hers--I mean to marry her.

ARNOLPHE

Marry?

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

That, with your Notary's help, I can do tomorrow. But there's tonight.

ARNOLPHE

What of tonight?

HORACE

Perhaps you'll think I'm foolish; but even before I'm married,

(HORACE CROSSES LEFT.)

she seems to be my wife. And there's her reputation to be thought of. She can't come home with me; because, in my lodgings, I'm alone--with only one room.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS TO HORACE.)

Dear Sir, would you, just for tonight, I hardly like to say it--Would you take care of her?

ARNOLPHE

Me--take care of her?

HORACE

I know it's a lot to ask.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE FACES AUDIENCE.)

Yes; but I will, my boy; of course I will. Bring her to me at once.

HORACE

I will. I will. At once. Oh, I'm so grateful.

(HORACE BEGINS EXIT UP LEFT.)

Oh, when you see her, you'll fall in love with her.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES UP CENTER AFTER HORACE.)

Wait! Wait a moment! Wait!

(ARNOLPHE OVER RIGHT SHOULDER.)

What am I thinking of? When the girl sees me--it's always possible--she may not want to come.

HORACE

She doesn't want to leave me anyhow.

ARNOLPHE

Is that so? In that case, we must be careful. We have to consider her. Let me advise. Forgive me, but I'm older.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN CENTER.)

Now, let me think: I'll stand aside. You tell her who I am. Old Seigneur Arnolphe, tell her--your father's oldest friend--and yours. And tell her this: I'll guard her, as if she were my own.

HORACE

How can I ever thank you?

ARNOLPHE

I'm pleased to do it. Very pleased--

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT.)

you'll never know how pleased. Now--go and send her to me. I'll wait here.

(ARNOLPHE MAKES A GESTURE, THROWING HIS CLOAK ROUND HIS FACE SO AS TO HIDE IT, BUT HE JUST OVERDOES IT.)

HORACE

Why are you doing that?

ARNOLPHE

Doing what?

HORACE

Putting your cloak about your face?

ARNOLPHE

I'm cold. The night air, you know. You were quite right, my boy--it's very dangerous, A touch of pleurisy.

HORACE

Oh, sir!

ARNOLPHE

No matter. Never mind. I'll risk my life for you--Only for Heaven's sake, dear fellow, and for mine--cut this thing short. As quick as you can, say your good night to her, allay her fears; tell her you'll fetch her early in the morning. Remember, every added moment brings me nearer Death--I fear pneumonia.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSING LEFT.)

Oh, indeed, I'll hurry--

(HORACE EXITS LEFT.)

you must get home to bed.

ARNOLPHE

Yes. Yes. I must. At once. Send her to me.

(HORACE ENTERS UP LEFT WITH AGNES AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO UPPER EDGE OF COLUMN.)

HORACE

My darling love, he'll guard you with his life--he's told me so, my father's oldest friend. No-one could be more suitable in all the world.

AGNES

I want to stay with you.

HORACE

I want you to: but, dearest, you can't. For one night--that's all--and for my sake, as well as yours.

AGNES

I'm not happy any more unless you're with me.

HORACE

It's the same with me.

AGNES

Then why not stay together! It's a silly world.

HORACE

You know I love you.

AGNES

Not as I love you. For if you did, you'd never let me go.
Who's that?

(AGNES LOOKING OVER AT ARNOLPHE.)

HORACE

That's him.

AGNES

Don't go.

HORACE

I must.

AGNES

Then come back soon.

HORACE

Tomorrow morning, before the sun is up, I'll come to his house, to fetch you; and we'll never part again. [SEE FIGURE 4]

AGNES

(AGNES LOOKS RIGHT TO ARNOLPHE. HE TURNS AWAY RIGHT, HIDING HIS FACE.)

I'm frightened. Don't leave me here, alone.

HORACE

Darling--you're not alone.

(ARNOLPHE BOWS.)

Look! There's my friend. And yours. Tomorrow morning.
Early. Till then--good night.

(HORACE KISSES AGNES AND EXITS UP LEFT. ARNOLPHE SNEAKS UP LEFT BEHIND AGNES AND GRABS HER.)



Figure 4

AGNES

Oh! Oh! No! No! No!

(ARNOLPHE EXITS WITH AGNES INTO THE HOUSE.)

Act III - Scene 5

(SCENE--OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE ENTER UP CENTER. THEY CARRY SOME LUGGAGE, WHICH THEY CARRY OFF UP RIGHT. AGNES ENTERS UP CENTER FROM RIGHT AND SITS DISCONSOLATELY ON THE BENCH. ARNOLPHE SLOWLY ENTERS UP CENTER. HE HAS REGAINED HIS COMPOSURE, BUT IS IN A COLD RAGE.)

ARNOLPHE

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE RE-ENTER UP RIGHT.)

Is all the packing done? All of it? Mine; and yours; and hers. All ready, eh? Ready to be off into the country at any moment. Good. You needn't hang about. I can make sure she doesn't run away. Go to your rooms. I'll call you when I want you--

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE EXIT UP RIGHT.)

in a moment.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES LEFT OF FRONT CENTER.)

Well! Miss Simplicity! Miss Innocence! Miss Cunning! Where did you learn it, eh? You're wicked from your birth--the lot of you--that's what it is.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE.)

Thank God, I know it; and can be cunning, too. I can match yours; and add some of my own.

(AGNES IS LOOKING FOR HELP.)

I have already.

(ARNOLPHE TURNS AND CROSSES UP STAGE CENTER TO AGNES.)

Don't look to your lover to come and rescue you--He knows me by another name, And in another house.

AGNES

(AGNES RISING AND CROSSING DOWN RIGHT.)

Why do you scold me so? I've done nothing wrong.

ARNOLPHE

Wrong! Done nothing wrong! To run off with a lover!
Nothing wrong!

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSES TO ARNOLPHE.)

But to be married. That's why I went to him. Marriage
takes away the sin--you told me so yourself.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, you're a half-wit. You can marry only one husband--and
you're to marry me.

AGNES

I'd much rather not.

ARNOLPHE

And why?

AGNES

Well--for one thing--you make it sound so awful.

(AGNES STEPS DOWN RIGHT.)

He makes it sound a joy. Besides, I love him.

ARNOLPHE

You dare stand there, and tell me that you love him?

AGNES

But it's true. The Nuns taught me always to tell the truth.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT OF CENTER.)

Oh, drat the Nuns! Oh, what a reward for doing all in my power--everything I could--to make you love me.

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO ARNOLPHE.)

What did you say--"to make me love you"?

ARNOLPHE

Yes.

AGNES

You've tried?

ARNOLPHE

Of course I have.

AGNES

(AGNES STEPS AWAY RIGHT.)

Well! Who would have thought it? You're not as good at it as Horace is.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS LEFT TO AGNES.)

Oh, how you answer back. Any sophisticated Miss in High Society could learn from you. Very well! Since you're so clever, and know everything, answer me this: Consider everything I've done for you, had you educated, fed you; and clothed you;--and now, given you a house and servants of your own.

(ARNOLPHE INDICATES HOUSE UP STAGE.)

AGNES

I don't call those servants; they're more like prison guards. And had me educated. And taught.

(AGNES CROSSES DOWN RIGHT.)

What did you have me taught? Nothing--so I'm ashamed.
He taught me all I know and all I want to know.

(TO ARNOLPHE AND THEN TURNS AWAY.)

It's him I should be grateful to; not you.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES RIGHT TO AGNES.)

Oh, I could give you such a sounding smack.

AGNES

All right; go on; and do it. It wouldn't make me love you any more.

ARNOLPHE

My fingers itch to beat you. And everything you say, and do, and are--makes you more lovely. And I love you more.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES CENTER.)

And more, and more, and more.

(ARNOLPHE TAKES TWO STEPS UP STAGE.)

Oh, Women may be wicked--But Men are fools. Weak fools. And I'm a man.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSING BACK TO AGNES.)

I love you more than he does--I've known you so much longer. What did he do, to gain your love? He gave you presents. Well--what of that? I'll give you better ones. What d'you want? Just tell me. Fine clothes? And friends? And all the life of Paris? Yours--for the asking.

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES AWAY FROM AGNES.)

Don't look at me, like that; without a smile. What did he do to please you?

(ARNOLPHE STEPPING BACK TO AGNES.)

Kissed your neck and arms--

(ARNOLPHE SEIZES HER HAND. SHE JERKS IT AWAY.)

and so will I. You seize you hand away. What do you want? For I'm your slave.

(ARNOLPHE ON HIS KNEES.)

See! I'm on my knees. Just say the word. I'll beat my brains out, or I'll kill myself.

AGNES

(AGNES CROSSING UP STAGE LEFT BEHIND ARNOLPHE.)

Oh, please do stop. Why should you kill yourself? It's all so silly. If you're my slave . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE GROVELS LEFT TO AGNES.)

I am. I am. I am.

AGNES

Then take me back to Horace--

(ARNOLPHE RISES.)

and let me marry him.

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE GRABS HER. ALAIN AND GEORGETTE ENTER RIGHT.)

This is insufferable. (HE YELLS.) Alain! (TO AGNES.) You've had your chance. (HE YELLS.) Alain!

(ARNOLPHE GIVES HER TO ALAIN.)

I'll never offer you another thing. (TO ALAIN.) Bring around the carriage--to the back; and put the luggage in. Then come and let me know the minute that you're ready. (TO GEORGETTE.) During the journey you're to guard the girl. Don't let her out of sight.

(ALAIN EXITS WITH GEORGETTE. ENRIQUE, ORONTE AND CHRYSALDE ENTER UP LEFT. ENRIQUE RINGS THE BELL.)

We start at once. Now, who--in God's name--is that?

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE PEERS AROUND HOUSE RIGHT.)

I expect it's him.

ALAIN

It isn't

GEORGETTE

Three of 'em.

ARNOLPHE

Three! D'you know 'em?

ALAIN

Not from Adam.

ARNOLPHE

(GEORGETTE EXITS RIGHT. ARNOLPHE PAUSES, THEN FOLLOWS.)

I'll go myself and see.

Act III - Scene 6

(SCENE--OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. ENRIQUE IS KNOCKING AT THE DOOR. CHRYSALDE IS BEHIND HIM RIGHT, THEN ORONTE.)

ORONTE

My good Enrique! Are you quite sure this is the house?

ENRIQUE

Well--from the address and the description, yes.

CHRYSALDE

I think you must be wrong. I know the man who owns it.

ORONTE

Who?

CHRYSALDE

Arnolphe.

ORONTE

Arnolphe! Seigneur Arnolphe? Oh, no--you're wrong yourself; I know him well. One of my oldest friends. Last time I was

in Paris,

(ORONTE CROSSING DOWN LEFT.)

I had dinner with him--at his house--it wasn't here.

CHRYSLALDE

He has other houses.

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSING UP STAGE TO BENCH.)

One here in Paris--where you had dinner; Another, in the country; but this is where you'll find him--

(CHRYSLALDE SITS.)

under another name.

ORONTE

Another name?

(ORONTE CROSSES UP STAGE TOWARD CHRYSLALDE.)

What do you mean? What for?

CHRYSLALDE

He's very close about it. Something to do with a young girl he means to marry.

ORONTE

Marry! Arnolphe?

(ORONTE CROSSES DOWN LEFT.)

A young girl--you can't be serious!

CHRYSLALDE

Indeed I am.

ORONTE

But he's as old as I am. Even older. Another name!

(ORONTE CROSSES STAGE RIGHT.)

He must be insane. What's he call himself?

CHRYSLALDE

He told me--but I can't remember.

ORONTE

Then, who lives here?

CHRYSLALDE

The girl. That's why he bought the house. And today, I think it is, he plans to marry.

ORONTE

Well, well, well. We've come in time to pull his leg, and give him a wedding-feast.

(ORONTE CROSSING UP STAGE TO DOOR.)

Let's knock again. Enrique, dear fellow, you've been misinformed. These aren't the two we're after.

CHRYSLALDE

Strange no-one answers. He keeps two servants; and the girl herself.

ENRIQUE

Here's some kind of garden, at the back; and another door.

CHRYSLALDE

Let's try that. There must be someone in.

(CHRYSLALDE, ENRIQUE AND ORONTE EXIT UP RIGHT.
ARNOLPHE COMES THROUGH DOOR CENTER. HORACE ENTERS QUICKLY
RIGHT. ARNOLPHE BACKS FROM DOOR CENTER.)

HORACE

(HORACE ENTERS STAGE LEFT.)

Seigneur Arnolphe!

ARNOLPHE

Horace!

HORACE

(HORACE RUSHING TO ARNOLPHE.)

Disaster! Utter disaster!

ARNOLPHE

What's the matter now?

HORACE

Last night, I returned to my lodgings, walking on air--to find my father waiting, with a man Enrique--a childhood friend; and fabulously rich--he has a daughter--I'm to marry her. My father's adamant. I wasn't even able to come to your house this morning.

(HORACE CROSSING LEFT. ARNOLPHE MOVES AWAY RIGHT.)

This man Enrique--rolling in money; and think he owns the world, insisted on coming in this direction, to find some house or other; and I had to come with them. But, as we passed your Notary, I slipped inside, to try and get a message to you. Oh, Seigneur Arnolphe! You'll intercede for me. You won't see Agnes snatched away from me--under your very nose.

ARNOLPHE

I'll talk to your father if I get the chance. You can rely on me.

HORACE

I knew I could. I knew.

(ORONTE AND CHRYSALDE ENTER UP RIGHT.)

Why, there he is!

ORONTE

(ORONTE BOWING.)

My dear old friend!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE BOWING. THEY EMBRACE.)

Oronte! Dear fellow! But I'm glad to see you.

ORONTE

(ORONTE CROSSES RIGHT OF CENTER.)

And what a day to choose to run across you so. Your wedding-day. You to be married--at your age. I'm proud of you.

ARNOLPHE

(ORONTE TURNS TO LOOK AT CHRYSALDE DOWN RIGHT.)

How did you know? Oh, Chrysalde has told you; yes. I and my future wife start for the country in a moment's time. Another minute, and you'd have missed us.

HORACE

Seigneur Arnolphe!

(HORACE CROSSES UP STAGE TO ARNOLPHE.)

But you never mentioned it.

ARNOLPHE

No. You had other things to think about.

(ARNOLPHE TAKING ORONTE DOWN STAGE--NODDING TO HORACE.)

Talking of getting married, I hear you plan a marriage for your son.

ORONTE

And the young dog objects.

ARNOLPHE

Oh, but that's very wrong.

HORACE

Wrong?

ARNOLPHE

There's nothing I feel more passionately about than filial duty.

HORACE

(HORACE CROSSING DOWN STAGE.)

But, Seigneur Arnolphe . . .

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE TURNS LEFT TO HORACE.)

A son must obey his father. And in everything. This modern cult of disobedience must be stamped out.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT.)

Oh come, my dear fellow. Force a young man to marry, and against his will?

ARNOLPHE

You take the rebel's part. I might have known it. Irresponsible! This refusal of the young to recognize Authority

(HORACE CROSSES DOWN STAGE LEFT.)

threatens Society. Horace! Obey your father! It's your Duty. And you, old friend, insist on his Obedience. It's your Duty, too. And doing your duty, both of you, you'll both find happiness.

GEORGETTE

(GEORGETTE ENTERS UP CENTER.)

Master, what shall I do? The girl's run mad. I can't keep hold of her. She wants to get away.

ARNOLPHE

See how it is with me. So eager is the girl I'm going to marry,

(ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE RIGHT TO ORONTE.)

there's no restraining her. You heard? "She wants to get away" into my coach into the country,

(AGNES RUSHES FROM THE HOUSE INTO HORACE'S ARMS. HE SWINGS HER AROUND.)

into my arms. Georgette--Here!

AGNES

Horace, my love!

HORACE

My darling, darling, girl.

ORONTE

In Heaven's name--what's this?

ARNOLPHE

Keep calm. Don't lose your head. I'll deal with this.
That's right, my dear--say your good-byes to him.

(ALAIN ENTERS UP CENTER TRYING TO GET ARNOLPHE'S ATTENTION.)

And you, young fellow--take a last farewell.

ORONTE

(TO ALAIN.)

What is it? What d'you want?

ALAIN

(ALAIN TO ORONTE.)

A word with my Master.

ORONTE

Your Master?

ALAIN

Monsieur La Souche.

HORACE

La Souche? Did I hear La Souche?

(HORACE CROSSES RIGHT WITH SWORD DRAWN.)

Is this man called La Souche?

ALAIN

Well, it's 'is name.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE CROSSES RIGHT TO COLUMN AND SITS.)

Yes! That's the name. La Souche.

ENRIQUE

(ENRIQUE ENTERS UP LEFT AND CROSSES TO CENTER. ARNOLPHE CROSSES DOWN STAGE TO FRONT STAGE AND SITS ON LEFT.)

Then you're the man I want.

ORONTE

(ORONTE CROSSING BEHIND ARNOLPHE LEFT TO ENRIQUE.)

Enrique, dear fellow, can you unravel me this mystery?

ENRIQUE

Indeed I can. And there's no mystery. Some fifteen years ago,

(ENRIQUE CROSSES LEFT.)

I had to go, on business, to America. My wife came with me.

(ENRIQUE CROSSES RIGHT.)

But for our baby girl, she feared the long, uncertain, perilous weeks at sea.

(ENRIQUE CROSSES LEFT.)

Believing we should be away only a year, or less, we found a woman we could trust

(ENRIQUE CROSSES RIGHT TO ORONTE.)

and left our child with her. But in America,

(ENRIQUE TAKES THREE STEPS DOWN STAGE.)

my wife died of a fever, and the business failed and I was alone; with nothing.

(ENRIQUE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT TO ORONTE.)

But as with awful suddenness the Fates had taken all that I had, with equal wantonness, they gave me back, more than I needed. By a first stroke of luck

(ENRIQUE CROSSES LEFT.)

I found myself with money in my purse; with which--caring little whether I won or lost--I speculated. And won; and won; and won.

(ENRIQUE CROSSES RIGHT TO ORONTE.)

And so I hastened home, sought out the woman, and learned from her she'd given my daughter to a man La Souche.

HORACE

(TO ARNOLPHE.)

Oh, what hypocrisy! What cunning! What deceit! You nauseating villain.

ENRIQUE

(ENRIQUE CROSSING DOWN STAGE TO ARNOLPHE.)

Sir, let me shake your hand. I've much to thank you for. The woman told me how you'd cared for her, and everything she has, she owes to you.

(ENRIQUE CROSSING CENTER. ORONTE COUNTERS RIGHT.)

Now, bring her to me.

(ENRIQUE CROSSES UP STAGE RIGHT TO ORONTE.)

Oh, my eyes ache to see the only living thing that is some part of me.

(HORACE BRINGS AGNES TO RIGHT ARCH, TAPS ENRIQUE ON THE SHOULDER, AND CROSSES TO AGNES. AGNES CROSSES RIGHT TO ENRIQUE.)

AGNES

I've often heard the story, how my parents went to America--and disappeared.

ENRIQUE

You! Can you be the baby that I left, asleep. Indeed you are. Your mother's very image.

AGNES

You say she's dead.

ENRIQUE

She lives in my heart--and here.

(ENRIQUE TAKES LOCKET FROM POCKET.)

AGNES

(AGNES TAKES LOCKET.)

I'm looking at myself. You were a legend to me--my mother and father--I never believed in you. But this is my mother's picture--and you're my father.

ENRIQUE

(ENRIQUE EMBRACING AGNES.)

My dear! My child!

HORACE

But if she's your daughter . . .

ENRIQUE

Yes, my boy, take her. I'm just in time to give her to you; and with her, the greater part of all my fortune--which is immense.

ORONTE

(ORONTE TAKES ONE STEP RIGHT TO CENTER.)

I still don't understand. (TO HORACE.) Do you know the girl?

HORACE

This man, La Souche will tell you.

CHRYSLALDE

(CHRYSLALDE RISING.)

No. I'll not have that. La Souche is dead. And my old friend Arnolphe knows nothing of it. (TO HORACE.) You have

the girl; at least be generous. (TO ARNOLPHE.) Oh!
You're a lucky man!

ARNOLPHE

(ARNOLPHE RISES AND CROSSES UP STAGE TO CHRYSALDE.)

Eh? What's that? Me? Lucky!

CHRYSALDE

There's one thing spoils your life; and only one--

(CHRYSALDE TAKES ARNOLPHE UP STAGE TO SIT ON BENCH.)

This haunting, obsessing fear of being deceived; of being
made a fool of; of wearing your cuckold's horns. And there's
only one way to deal with that--to eliminate the risk--

(CHRYSALDE SITS.)

Not to get married. My dear old friend, accept my congratulations.

ORONTE

(ORONTE TAKES ONE STEP DOWN STAGE.)

And mine!

ENRIQUE

(ALAIN AND GEORGETTE MOVE DOWN STAGE TO HORACE AND AGNES.)

And mine!

(CHRYSALDE, ORONTE AND ENRIQUE GATHER ROUND ARNOLPHE,
SHAKING HIS HANDS AND BANGING HIM ON THE BACK. HORACE AND
AGNES EMBRACE AS--THE CURTAIN FALLS.) [SEE FIGURE 5]



Figure 5

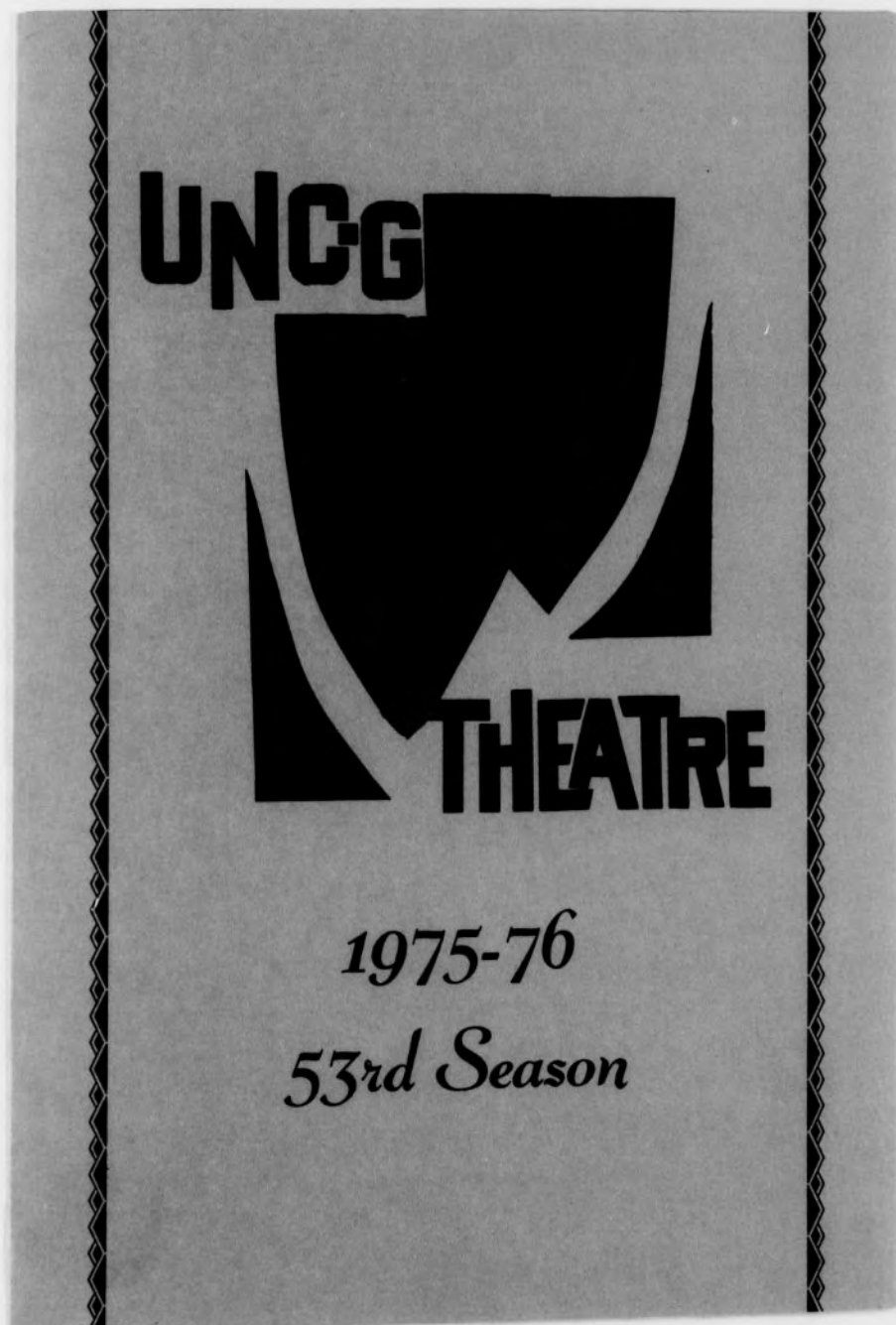


Figure 6

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

School for Wives was presented in Taylor Theatre for five performances on the evenings of November 19, 20, 21, 22, and on the afternoon of November 23rd, 1975. Two additional performances were also given in the afternoon and evening of November 25th, 1975, at Reidsville Theatre, Reidsville, N. C.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the director's critical evaluation of this production of School for Wives. The evaluation will be in four parts: (1) a comparison of the initial interpretation and the final production, (2) actor-director relationships, (3) audience reaction to the production and (4) the director's personal observations.

Goals and Achievements

School for Wives was seen by the director as a light comedy dealing with the foibles of human nature. Although it was written over three hundred years ago its intrinsic humor still makes School for Wives relevant for a modern audience. The director attempted to bring to the audience a play that was entertaining. Relatively little effort was made to transmit to the audience a "message" because the director feels there is no deep meaning to School for Wives. The simple warning of allowing passions to dominate one's

life is readily discernable to all and needs no reinforcing. From observation of the seven performances, the director is sure that his production of School for Wives was a reasonably successful one.

In attempting to present the play as the director wished, two basic problems were encountered, (1) developing and maintaining the correct period style and (2) ensuring that the play would be a fresh experience for the audiences. To give integrity to the performance the director placed a great deal of emphasis on the vocal and physical aspects of the production. To make the play a little more relevant to a modern audience, the director selected an adaptation of the original text rather than a direct translation.

The cast responded enthusiastically to the movement and voice development work that was done during the rehearsal period. The director feels that this work was beneficial to the actors and thus to the production. Only one major problem was encountered with movement and voice work. A few days before opening, during a group discussion between the cast and the director, the cast made it known to the director that they felt the physical and vocal development had impaired the development of characterization and character interplay. The director took immediate steps to repair this damage. Rehearsal on the following evening was devoted exclusively to working on character.

During the following rehearsals, the director clearly saw the results of this one evening's work. Depth of characterization and the relationships between the characters improved tremendously. Furthermore, the interruption of the rehearsal schedule had no effect on the production.

The director feels that the work on developing the period movement was time well spent and was of great benefit to the cast and to the production. The performance had a definite period feel and the fluidity of movement the director wished.

The vocal development work, aimed at improving the actors' diction and instilling an English accent was another aspect of the rehearsal period that the cast enjoyed. The director planned a series of exercises designed specifically to help the actors overcome the relatively poor acoustics of the theatre in Taylor Building. The acoustic properties of Taylor Theatre have a tendency to soften consonant sounds. Therefore, soft or rapid speech is often rendered unintelligible. However, by careful attention to the vocal element of the production, this problem was largely overcome.

The development and usage of an English accent was also achieved with varying degrees of success among the cast. Some members of the cast found adapting and maintaining a different accent harder than others, and, although there were many flaws, the desired effect was obtained.

The director believes that ultimately the stylistic unity of the play was enhanced, and that the actors benefited from having to learn and use an English accent under performance conditions.

One particular criticism was raised, concerning the use of accents in the production. The director had decided, prior to the rehearsal period, that the actors playing the servant characters would have a northern English accent. This was to underline the difference in social class between the servants and the other characters, reinforcing the more earthy quality of the two servants. The difference between the accents confused some audience members who did not understand why it was done. This was a mistake on the part of the director to whom the difference was as obvious as the difference between the accents of the Northern and Southern states of the U.S.A. The director understood the inherent humor in the use of northern English accent but did not realize that an American audience would not appreciate it.

One of the main reasons that the director selected Miles Malleon's adaptation in preference to a translation was that it required two sets instead of the one set originally used by Moliere. The visual impact of the delightful exterior being transformed swiftly into an equally delightful interior was excellent. Both sets were perfect backgrounds for the actors to work against and

added greatly to the standard of the production. The rapid transformation from one set to the other was easily effected by the two actors playing the servants and did nothing to interrupt the flow of action. In some of the changes, period music was played on the harpischord. This had the effect of making the changes part of the action.

The final stylistic element was added when the actors wore their costumes for the first time. The costumes gave a quality of completeness to the style that had been evolved during rehearsal. The single flaw in the costumes was the wig worn by the actor playing the character of Chrysalde. The wig rental company sent a vivid red wig instead of a light brown one. The red wig clashed violently with the orange costume worn by the actor. There was, however, no way in which the mistake could be rectified.

After a great deal of difficulty and frustration, a harpsichord and a musician to play it were found. Using the harpsichord in the production had both its problems and its compensations. The musician was costumed according to the period and the style of the play and she looked magnificent and played beautifully. However, the delicate tones of the harpischord proved barely sufficient to carry across the auditorium of Taylor Building, especially with a full house. Criticism was leveled at the length of the music played before the play started and immediately after the intermission. The director reduced the length of playing time

down to what he considered a viable compromise, but the audience reaction was still very diverse. Some spectators felt that the inclusion of the music was excellent and heightened their aesthetic experience. Other spectators felt that the length of the music, eventually cut to approximately four minutes, was too long. The director finally concluded that appreciation of the music was conducted on a very personal basis and would not be appreciated by all of the audience members. The director further concluded that while inclusion of the harpsichord was an excellent concept, he allowed insufficient time to experiment with the instrument's use.

One of the major areas of concentration in this production was the achievement of the style the director believes the play demands. In an attempt to create this style the director decided to exclude much of the physical humor and farcial comedy often associated with Moliere's plays. The director firmly believes that School for Wives was an attempt by Moliere to escape from the lazzi and overblown stock characters that he knew so well. However, in an attempt to pursue this belief, the director feels he may have gone too far in his exclusion of physical comedy. If the production had contained a little more of the farcial element the director feels it could have had a greater audience appeal.

Actor-Director Relationships

The relationship formed between the director and the cast was, for the director at least, one of the best aspects of the rehearsal and performance period. There was no personal friction between the cast members and the director and during the production the director felt that a mutual respect developed between himself and the cast.

The cast and the director recognized the difficult challenge presented by production of a period comedy. The most difficult task for the cast was to find and then maintain the style the director demanded. The actors met this challenge in different ways, attaining varied degrees of success.

The problems encountered by the cast came from a variety of sources. Lack of experience, demands of the director, and coping with a degree of miscasting are just three of the reasons the actors encountered frustrations. However, the rehearsal atmosphere ensured that the cast were always ready to discuss their problems, with the director and with each other. There was never, as far as the director knows, any unspoken frustration or dissatisfaction among the members of his cast.

Another aspect of the relationship between the cast and the director that was highly satisfying to the director

was the way in which the cast accepted rehearsal discipline. Rehearsals began promptly at seven o'clock with a movement and voice limber. From that point onwards, sometimes until 11:30 or later, the work was continuous. Throughout what was a long and rigorous rehearsal period, the cast conducted themselves with self-control and discipline, two factors that helped make the rehearsals enjoyable and productive.

Audience Reaction

The audience response to School for Wives was basically favorable. Some audience members, however, to judge by comments received by this director, were disappointed that School for Wives was not the farce they had expected but was a much gentler comedy of manners. During the course of the performance period the director also received many favorable comments about this aspect of the production.

During the performances the audiences were generally very attentive. The director feels that the play moved with sufficient speed to ensure that there were no long, flat spots in the performance that allowed the audience to become restless. There were, in each performance, a number of belly laughs but there were relatively few. The most common reaction was a continuous chuckle, interspersed with silences when the audience responded to the moments of pathos in the play.

An interesting contrast of audiences was provided during the afternoon performance in the Reidsville Theatre.

This audience was composed primarily of high school students and was the largest audience for which School for Wives played, numbering nearly one thousand. The director was apprehensive about the student's reaction to this relatively sophisticated comedy, knowing that their exposure to theatre was minimal. However, this fear proved groundless, the students enjoyed the performance a great deal. They tended to find funny many things to which an adult audience did not respond, and laughed at parts of the play that the director and cast had not anticipated. The students enjoyed the physical comedy in the performance and responded well to Horace's stupidity and Arnolphe's cunning.

The Reidsville experience, although a great deal of extra work for the cast and crew, proved to be a worthwhile one. The two audiences were a great contrast to the Greensboro audiences and gave the actors two separate challenges. The evening audience in Reidsville was the very opposite of the afternoon one in terms of size, only one hundred and thirty-four people turned up. In an auditorium that seats seventeen hundred, this audience obviously found itself rather lost. However, after an initially tentative reaction, the audience settled down to enjoy the performance and what it lacked in quantity, the audience made up for in quality. After the performance many members of the audience conversed favorably on the play and were delighted that it had been performed in Reidsville.

Only one review was printed. The reviewer, W. C. Burton of the Greensboro Daily News, was delighted with the production, calling it "the most visually beautiful production of this deft and perceptive comedy ever staged anywhere."¹ Mr. Burton discussed all of the basic elements of the production, the set, costumes, acting, and the play in varying degrees of detail. The director was disappointed, however, that no critical statements were made by the reviewer.

Personal Observations

To work as the director in a large-scale production is a great learning experience. This director feels that it will be a long time before the total experience of his production of School for Wives is fully assimilated into his knowledge of theatre. This director feels that during the course of the production, he gained a great deal of knowledge about practical theatre work and also he gained a valuable insight in working with people, both his cast and the crews responsible for the technical excellence of the production. When a large group of people are brought together for the production of a play, a false situation is created. The pressures of this situation form a delicate balance between success and failure. The director found

¹W. C. Burton, "UNC-G Play Full of Charm," Greensboro Daily News, 21 November 1975.

how difficult it was to maintain this balance and ensure that his production would be a success. The director feels that working and communicating with people was for him the major learning experience of the production, and that, although he made many mistakes, the production, on the whole, functioned smoothly.

The director is indeed grateful that he was allowed the opportunity to direct a production of this size at this stage in his career. The experience the director gained in this production of School for Wives will be of tremendous value in his future work in theatre. The director will long remember his first major production with a great deal of pleasure.

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